BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

NETAJI—THE MAN

REMINISCENCES

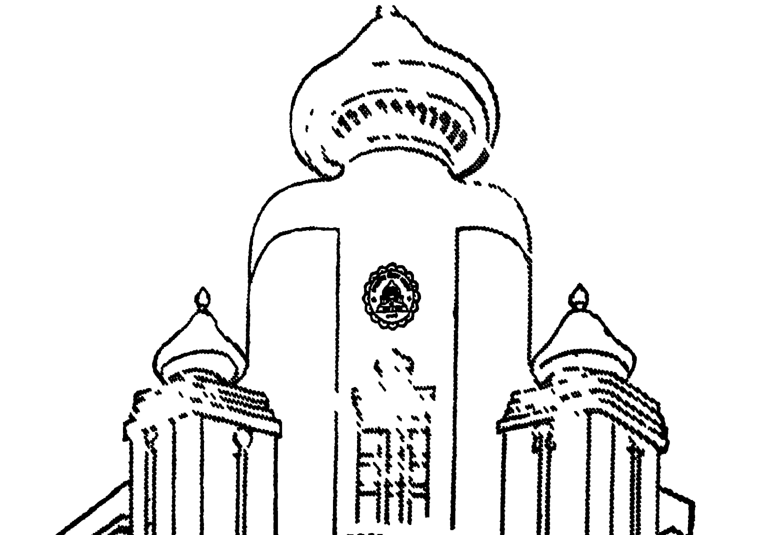
Dilip Kumar Roy

GENERAL EDITORS

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY



What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds

2, Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya

3 Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student s personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable

4 Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern

Rs. 3-00

5 The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process

6 Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres

7 The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student, inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies, entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles, and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sahitya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8 The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi

9 Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change, not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya, and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

Organising Committee

LILAVATI MUNSHI—*Chairman*

K K BIRLA

S G NEVATIA

J H DAVE

S RAMAKRISHNAN

who were divine, it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival, but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavans's activity successful

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI
3rd October, 1951

K M MUNSHI

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

My reminiscences on Netaji first saw the light of day at the end of the year 1946 Nearly two decades have glided by since then and, naturally, I have had to modify some of my views and comments on him in the light of subsequent events some of which have been not only spectacular but revealing to boot But this is not important What is important is that during all these time his stature has continually increased till it tends today to become almost legendary, so much so that one is forcefully reminded of a pregnant line of Rabindranath in his immortal poem on Shahjahan *Tomar kirtir cheye tumi je mahat*, which means "You are greater than your achievements" Or, shall I say, Netaji's great life, deepening into a beacon, as it were, reminds one of the poet Browning's emphasis on aspiration as against achievement

> Not on the vulgar mass
> Called work must sentence pass,
> Things done that took the eye and had the price,
> O'er which from level stand,
> The low world laid its hand,
> Found straightaway to its mind, could value in a trice.
>
> Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
> All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me—
> This was I worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped

I stress this as it is from this view-point that I have attempted my appraisement of Netaji's personality all through our close friendship in the course of which we have both passed through deserts of pain and aridity as well as magic gardens of joy and rich fulfilment, albeit in worlds of different ideals and dreams

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs 2 50

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities, we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within

the framework of the Moral Order, we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him

The world, we feel, is too much with us Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C Rajagopalachari, the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H V Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere" After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic, it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some

INVOCATION

O son of strength, who spurned on earth the lures of lesser loves' delight,
And, to help us worldlings, gave up all for which we clamour, fret and fight!
You lived to achieve our India's freedom in our homeland and abroad
And we hailed you as our country's leader, by your sunrise overawed
You sang the Gita's song "Arise and deal death to the shadows' tyranny!"
And so our Lord of dawn booned you with the crown of Immortality.
Illusion's slaves will long to cull life's coloured shells with sleepless zeal
And stay ensnared by Siren Maya's transient beauty's dark appeal
They wonder why you won no laurels from the hand of Destiny,
And what mad impulse made you follow a phantom gleam everlastingly!
You sang the Gita's song "Arise and deal death to the shadows' tyranny!"
And so our Lord of dawn booned you with the crown of Immortality
How can the prudent miser ever respond to the call of sacrifice?
Why Radha chased the Flute ofFlame—how can they know, the worldly-wise?
How can the addict of the flesh aspire for the starland's bliss?
Or the worm who never pined for sky the thrill of soaring eagles miss?
You sang the Gita's song "Arise and deal death to the shadows' tyranny!"
And so our Lord of dawn booned you with the crown of Immortality.
You chanted the Gita's deathless hymn. "Wage war we must to do His will
And quell the embattled alien hordes and, dying tonight, His Morn reveal,
We'll cross the seven seas, ride the storm and rule the waves, may bless us God!
We'll stake our all for the All-in-all, redeem our Motherland with our blood
You sang the Gita's song "Arise and deal death to the shadows' tyranny!"
And so our Lord of dawn booned you with the crown of Immortality.

It is entitled *An Indian Pilgrim* at the end of which is appended a sheaf of his letters to his mother, translated from Bengali These letters, incidentally, amply bear out my contention (as he himself confesses in one of them) that Netaji was a mystic *par excellence* and not a politician For none but an authentic mystic could pour out in letter after letter to his mother (and he was a mere teen-ager at the time) his touching aspiration for God and godliness, saints and holiness and the sacredness of the very soil of Mother India he adored

Hari Krishna Mandir, Poona-16 January 1966 — DILIP KUMAR ROY

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All between pp. 72-73

DEDICATION

To
Hari Vishnu Kamath
and
Chandulal Desai

Dear Friends,

I dedicate my *Netaji—the Man* to you for a twofold reason

First, because you were among those Netaji loved as his friends and on whom he did rely

Secondly, because you recognised the mystic flame which burned in his heart quenchlessly all his life, the white flame that made him write to his mother when he was a mere boy of fifteen "Mother, India is God's beloved land"

You will remember I made mention of this revealing letter in my discourses on him in New Delhi in December 1964 because you were both present at the meeting

I quoted also his hortatory speech to the I N A soldiers whom he led to the gates of Imphal on July 4, 1944, a feat which made history

> "We should have but one desire today the desire to die so that India may live, the desire to face a martyr's death so that the path to freedom may be paved with the martyrs' blood"

He cherished this phenomenal aspiration all his life, to his last breath May we in our turn cherish his dear memory.

No true aspiration is vain, says the *Gita* Or, in the words of Tagore

I know no single prayer of love, by life begun,
Though unsustained,
No bud before it blossomed on the earth fell—wan
And shadow-stained,
No ill-starred rill that pathless in the desert ran,
Was lost, O friend!
Nothing, I know, that aches for its hour of bloom shall wait
Ever in vain
And all in me that's still unborn—inviolate,
Trembles amain
In music on thy harp-strings? Lord, beyond the fate
Of muted pain

With love,
DILIP

* Translated from Tagore's famous song *Jibane jato puja holo na sara* by myself.

ONE

1913, I was in the Matriculation class in the Metropolitan Institution founded by the great Vidyasagar, cramming to the top of my bent I felt it incumbent on me to do my best to prove my mettle by irradiating unstintingly the lustre of a resplendent crammer, who aspired to rank among the first twelve 'matriculates I failed I ranked several rungs lower in the First Division People said that music had been the cause of my ruin They were not far out For music *was* for me—woe is me!— a greater idol than even the model of the ideal crammer But this I have been able to blurt out *after* the event Within the four walls of school I had almost forgotten my music— till I was again roused from my torpor by the outside world resonant with the "concord of sweet sounds" This was the background My hero was Khitish Chatterji, who made his mark later as a well-known intellectual of Bengal He was the "first boy" of our class I, plodding Dilip, was only the "second boy" I could not beat him in our class examinations, strain ever so hard as I would.

Suddenly, one Nibaran, hailing from Cuttack, burst a bomb-shell We had all ventilated in unison our prophecy that Khitish would top the list of successful matriculates Now, this Nibaran, an impossible provincial, told me, smiling "No fear, my dear day-dreamer! In our Cuttack Ravenshaw School there is a jewel of a boy, Subhash, son of Janakinath Bose He will far outshine *your* jewel"

"Indeed!" I did my best trying to outsmile him But Nibaran, a tough nut, was hard to crack. He went

one better on my know-all smile and met it on the rebound with a redoubtable guffaw

"Likhe rakh", he said in Bengali, meaning I could put it down in black and white and verify subsequently the oracle of a born prophet

I was at once intrigued and indignant Our first-boy (we all swore by our school patriotism) must outclass all other first-boys in this universe How dare an interloper butt in and beat *our* Khitish of unrivalled memory and angelic intelligence ! (Not that we were at all well--posted about the mental equipment of the angle world !) Aye, Khitish who looked like a giant even physically, Khitish whose father had collaborated with him and written out his ninety essays which he memorised, Khitish who had never been absent for a day in our school, Khitish who, even after school hours, took private lessons in English and mathematics, in short, Khitish who was one in a million, as even our phlegmatic Headmaster said, with a catch in his voice! Nay, we all felt like murder whenever Nibaran maddened us with his cryptic-triumphant smile

And Khitish wasn't one to let us down he did us proud by ranking seventh among 10,000 matriculates (I had to eat humble pie, standing 18th, or was it 24th ?)

But hulloah ! What is this ? Subhash, ranking second, after Pramatha Sarcar of the Mitra institution ! My hair stood perpendicular like a porcupine's !

Now flashed Nibaran the prophet once again, his face wreathed in smiles "And he would have out-topped this Sarcar, too, had he been a bookworm like them But Subhash never cared to 'cram' He consorted with Yogis and Sages all the time and pored over Vivekananda's works, not your blessed text-books, I assure you " And

how he chortled! It almost seemed as if it was he, and not Subhash, who had put Khitish in his place

But this blow, or shall I say thrill, made "the jewel of Ravenshaw School" outflame into a "star" insomuch that I changed my hero overnight Christ may have been right when he said that children are cherubs incognito, but their faces on earth cannot claim to glow with the hearts' loyalty A more coloured idol would wean them away in a flash from their old ones they have no ties nor anchorage that bind them to the past

Thus it began—my adoration of Subhash, the thrilling vanquisher of our invicible First Boy! I strove in my own small way—*a la* Sherlock Holmes—to gather titbits of information, relevant, and irrelevant, about the new star on our academic horizon Nibaran, I may own—without ado—had risen overnight in my estimation. With adolescents prophecy succeeds even more than success So, I lent him a reverent ear now that he, proud

---

Years later some of his posthumous letters, written to his mother in 1912-13, have amply vindicated Nibaran To quote but from two of these

"Revered Mother! The essence of human life—a continuous cycle of birth and death—is dedication to Lord Hari Life is meaningless without it If an educated person has no character, shall I call him a *pundit*? Never And, if an uneducated person is conscientious in his ways, believes in and loves God, I am prepared to accept him as a *Mahapundit* Learning a few platitudes does not make a man learned true knowledge comes from realisation of God The rest is not knowledge I worship the man whose heart is overflowing with the love of God Mother, what, in your opinion, is the purpose of education? . I do not know if you will be happiest if we grow up to be judges, magistrates, barristers or high-placed officials or if we come to be admired for wealth and fortune by worldly men Merciful God has given us this life for His worship and His work—but, Mother, do we do His work? Shame on this Godless, education One who does not sing His glory has been born in vain!"

(*An Indian pilgrim,* by Netaji, Asia Publishing House pp 117-120)

as a peacock, told me ever so many things I itched to know

Subhash—a great scholar (we used the epithet pitilessly)—number one A pure character—number two No girl dare darken with her shadow even the shadow of his shadow—number three A devotee of Vivekananda—number four And last, though not least, lo, he goes away from home as a Sannyasi* in search of a Guru! After this final, apocalyptic revelation I just had to capitulate What chance had a normal Khitish against such a superhuman colossus?

For I was already, at twelve, an ardent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and was fully persuaded then—a persuasion that was, subsequently, to ripen into a bedrock conviction—that there could not be a greater message than the one given by that great Messiah of Dakshineswar: "*To realise the Divine is the ultimate object of life—the highest pursuit of the soul—and beware, ye who aspire for He brooks no rival!*"

Coloured images rocketed endlessly in the sky of my adolescent imagination some day, maybe, Subhash and myself would start on our romantic trek, scouring the Himalayas in search of a great Guru! In those days I used to devour ever so many books on the lives of the saints and sages, apostles and prophets, messiahs and avatars and thrill in imagination to the picture of myself roaming the pathless forests to reach fearsome caves in the neighbourhood of friendly tigers and hooded serpents and wouldn't they eat out of my hands, or rather the

* I can't swear to it whether this piece of information I got in my first year College days or afterwards, when I came to know him better But it certainly was, to me, the most important piece of information, so I risk putting it here

hands of Subhash and myself? But alas, the unromantic world and the stark reality of text-books came again and again to shatter my dream-world peopled by fantastic figures Such is life!

And the citadel of this stark reality was the drab building of our College where we both had secured admission So naturally, I saw him daily, but I could not muster up courage to accost him

I had gleaned many more pieces of information about him, and with greater ease, now that he had come to live on Elgin Road while I stayed—after my father's death, in 1913—with my grandfather Dr P C Majumdar in his Theatre Road mansion Subhash's house was about half-a-mile from ours I used often to pass along Elgin Road and, looking wistfully at his room on an upper floor, speculate how we would fare someday as a couple of beggar *sadhus* and sing

'Koupinavantah khalu bhagyavantah those decked out in sack-cloth and ashes are the only fortunate ones on earth'

TWO

One fine morning, Subhash called on me—a bolt from the blue with the thunder transformed into light! The mountain had, indeed, come to Mahomet as Mahomet was too shy! I read books in running brooks and sermons in stones in uncontainable pride—on that first day I talked with my hero and idol And the first love-talk broke the ice, somehow He had come to draw me into a debating club he had started "Debates must be encouraged among us, the country will need great debaters,

parliamentarians—when we are free, that is "*

"Debates!" I fell from the sky, as our Bengali idiom has it "But didn't Sri Ramakrishna say through debates you never can win a clue to the truth?"

"Never mind what he said", Subhash cut in impatiently "We must not remain everlastingly moored to the past Traditions have been the bane of our Hindu culture We must create the future Did not your great father say

Chokher samne dharia rakhia atiter sei maha
adarsha,
Jagibo nutan bhaber rajye, rachibo premer
Bharatabarsha?

(Two decades afterwards, when I was in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo translated this song of my father's into English, this couplet means

Before us still there floats the ideal
of those splendid days of gold
A new world in our vision wakes,
Love's India we shall rise to mould)

I was thrilled

"You know his poems?" I asked

"Of course," he nodded brightly "He was a rare poet and a great composer of national songs I call him a *charan kavi* I often recite his song, *Mevar paharh, Mevar paharh* I wish I could sing it like you" And then "You should be proud of your father rather than of the old traditionalists who don't get us anyhere"

* Here I must state without apology that I will be putting his talks with me in my own language For I can't possibly recall the exact words he said then as well as later But the gist will be roundly faithful to what he said This I venture to claim as I know his ideology too well and respect his personality too sincerely to misinterpret him

I was in a dilemma. For while this revelation certainly endeared Subhash infinitely more to me, I could not, alas, even dream of ranking my father, however great, with Sri Ramakrishna, traditionalist or not The one was an *Iswarkoti,* the other a *Jivakoti*—a great *Jiva,* granted—a genius, a patriot a man of the noblest attainments, but still—no, truth was greater than all the fathers in the world put together—I winced at the very thought of ranking a poet and a patriot with an Avatar My view hereanent has not changed one tittle But adolescence even at its summit fervour lacks courage of conviction So I was tongue-tied

Subhash was pleased with my silence, taking it for acquiescence

"Yes," he pursued, "we should burn only to serve our country But mere emotion supplies little fuel One must seek equipment and become modern "

I was crushed He had come to the wrong shop The article of modernity was not to be found in the then thin body of an emotional singer and a reader of the *Puranas* and *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*

He took pity—at long last

"I don't want to be irreverent to Sri Ramakrishna," he said to me assuagingly "But I admire more his modern disciple, Vivekananda "

This was, surely, the last straw

"I can't," I exploded, "for I have never even dreamed that Vivekananda could come anywhere near his Master, as he himself admitted proudly more than once "

"That's just his greatness," he protested "For who made Sri Ramkrishna famous the world over ?"

I could feel blood spiralling up my temples

"A God-lover does not need fame to get his market-

value enhanced" I riposted essaying in vain to temper the heat in my retort

It was not in Subhash to be really irreverent towards anybody In that sense he was perhaps not an ultra-modern He appraised me for a little

"Look here, Dilip," he said in a conciliatory tone "Let's drop this discussion for the present I want you only to promise me that you will take an active part in our debating club"

I was highly flattered and, withal, scared

"Okay," I stammered out "Only—you see, I am too . too shy to speak. I have never spoken in public But I am well, a good listener"

Subhash laughed I never found Subhash more bewitching than when he was in the grip of laughter It always reminded me of the old simile of the grim rock overlaying a spring Just a push, a thud—and lo, the entire scenery is transformed!

"But though a debating society must have its listeners," he said, when his laughter had subsided, "I wonder how you are going to function as an active participator if your part were confined to that of an ideal listener only!"

"It's true," I admitted shamefacedly "But you see my difficulty, don't you?"

(Was there ever a greenhorn on earth who didn't feel he was adding to his stature when he emulated an adult and talked of problems and difficulties of life?)

"Well," Subhash shook his head more wisely still "My answer is Yes and No For difficulties gain their edge and weight because we, Indians, are so absurdly diffident Read Shakespeare *Screw your courage to the sticking-place and you'll not fail*"

A curious thing about Subhash was that even copy-book maxims somehow ceased to sound copy-bookish in his voice, throbbing with sincerity And in his accent even his Victorian Puritanism dressed up in the neo-Brahmo garb of standoffishness won a new ring which carried conviction This was brought home to me years later in Cambridge when we were thrown much together and were, naturally, I saw more of him in a deeper and clearer light But to resume

"That's true enough," I said with a wry smile, "but I haven't yet stated my difficulty fully Its crux is, in essence, the same as that of the 'Might-have-been Hero' my father immortalised in a song, the hero who might have shaped into all kinds of things but somehow was baulked of the final victory everytime, all along the line But his greatest misfire was in the arena of oratory Here is his dirge"—and I hummed (in Bengali)

Dekho, hote partam rajnaitik baktao antatah—
Kintu danrhalei hai smranshakti abadhya strir moto ;
Ar mukhasto sab buli eman bejai jai sab ghuliye ,
Ar sujog peye rukhe dandai birohi bhab guli he ,
Ta hajar kashi adar kori darhite hat buliye ,
Tai railam baithakkhana bakta ami chote motei to

(Here is my translation

I might have shaped into a leonine orator in my life ;
But when I rise to my feet, my memory acts like a rebel wife ;
And then the things rehearsed, alas, just leave me in the lurch,
And nought but choice seditious phrases answer my frantic search!

Aye, it's because of this slight hitch I failed
to range and roar
On the platform and so stayed, alas, a drawing-
room orator.)

"But," he laughed, "I am *not* enjoining you to outflame into an orator yet And surely, in the College sedition will remain a taboo till doomsday What I want is that we all should learn the art of thinking on our feet Besides, the practice of debating, arguing one's case like an advocate, does initiate one somewhat into the art of self-discipline and self-reliance which must be reckoned a splendid gain Don't you see how we, Indians, are utterly dependent on others—for action, views, drive—in fact, everything? So, I have decided that debating classes have got to help train us to stand on our legs"

It was, indeed, in this persuasive-cum-fiery way that he exhorted me to come out of my shell But he did more—and that is what he alone could do—to wit, he bent me to his will even though, in the end, he did fail to mould me into what he wished, so that although I knew full well it was not my *swadharma*—the destiny I was cut out for—I just *had* to acquiesce, willy-nilly

I do not remember what other topics we discussed on that day Nevertheless I have quoted him only to emphasise what a forceful personality he was even in those days, and how precocious, besides For it must be borne in mind that we were hardly seventeen yet, legally, we hadn't even come of age But whenever we, undergraduates, talked with Subhash, we somehow all looked up to him as our senior if not our mentor He had a native power to lead, and he knew it I know this consciousness has its deep drawbacks, and I will not say

it never did him any harm But this I will say with confidence that he had never once made people who obeyed him feel that they were his inferiors or subordinates Those who, during last war, dubbed Subhash an intolerant Fascist, inclined to treat all human beings as menials or underlings, cannot have known him

THREE

I have, I trust, brought it out lucidly enough that Subhash's line of development—*swadharma*—was not on all fours with my own We both knew we had been fashioned in different moulds I realised more and more (to my sorrow, I must confess) that Subhash was unlikely to flower out eventually into a man of God, even though he had a very strong streak of the mystic in him. He was built of too robust and radio-active a material Also, he found out that I, in my turn, was not nearly as malleable as I looked For all that, we remained close friends to the end No cloud of irremediable misunderstanding ever cast its baleful shadow upon the light of tenderness and sympathy with which we greeted each other from day to day And yet—in one phase of our relationship—Subhash knew that he had only to insist and I would obey him He loved politics I disliked it This must have stung him to the soul—causing a deep wound that could never completely heal But only on one occasion did he betray his pain, to wit, when I gave up worldly life and took to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in 1928, he spoke publicly against our "escapist mysticism" But even then, and afterwards as well, he loved the delinquent as tenderly as ever So I contend he could not have been intransigent, far less domineering.

All who have known his lovable self, limpid like the morning star, who have even once come under his affectionate glance of silence, who have worked with him even for a few days on a footing of simple camaraderie; must have realised that he could never impose his will on the free choice of those he would have given much to win over His faith in the liberal moral values was too luminous, his heart of affection too pure, his mental sympathy too genuine to suffer him to break others on the wheel of ruthless dictatorship, one of the deadliest scourges of our Godless age But I will close this topic with a personal instance Interested detractors of his goodness may not believe it, but to those who have known him, what I am going to relate will, I am sure, ring true

I have said, temperamentally we had little in common And the divergence between our outlooks on life only widened with time I came more and more to value art and poetry and music while he came more and more to idolise his country, India My patriotism grew more and more tenuous through lack of the heart's support which fared gropingly in the direction of mystic art and, I will risk the word, Godquest The more I grew, the less could I swear by this world of aimless activism, unscrupulous diplomacy and soulless organization of applied science The more he grew, the more divine seemed to him the cause of India's freedom I could not see that the political Indian was any better than the political Westerner, nor retain my faith in political nostrums with only a change of ugly names to serve as a camouflage for those who held the reins and key-posts of power Still I stayed attached to Subhash even as he stayed responsive to my attachment—to the last But to come to the incident

It happened about the year 1923 or 1924, that is, just when C R Das had started his Swaraj Party which rapidly grew in prestige and stature Bengal went mad. Subhash was Das's ablest lieutenant, his "right hand" as we used to style him Das wanted me to join his party and stand for election in my own constituency, against the Maharaja of Nadia I was disconcerted For although I had always admired the stature of his pitcuresque personality—to say nothing of his sacrifice—I could never bring myself to like the ways of politics, his or anybody else's for that matter Furthermore, I felt within me an other-worldly *vairagya* deepening day by day, a strange light which made political games seem utterly puerile I approached Subhash and told him again about my 'difficulties' "But," I added in the end, "if *you* still ask me to join politics I will, even if I have to go to jail for it —for your sake But, for political advantages I will never court prision I have long lost faith in national patriotism, as you know, and I am persuaded that whatever use it may have had for mankind in the past, today it has become the cancer of civilization Now tell me what you want me to do"

Subhash was evidently pained that I disowned patriotism so unqualifiedly. His eyes were dark with flitting shadows He gave me a long look, then put a hand on my shoulder and said "Dilip, do you think I am a fanatic or what? I know politics is not *your* line I know also how deeply you love poetry and mysticism and music How then can I ask you to sacrifice *your* ideal for *mine*? No Follow your own bent—*swadharma* I am not a chauvinist, Dilip Nor have I ever shouted, as some have, that every son of India must work in the same way for the Mother's liberation You could serve

India best, I feel, only if you were true to the deepest call of your nature "

I have not made him say what he didn't And I must add that this made me see him in a new light altogether For I had come gradually to look askance at the ways of our young hopefuls The absurd spinning-wheel as a message, too, left me cold and I never could understand how even great men like C R Das and Pandit Jawaharlal had been persuaded to flirt with *khaddar* and rationalise a mediaeval anachronism into a modern panacea I repeated to Subhash one day what Tagore had once told me about the spinning-wheel that it looked too puny and paltry to stir the souls of those who wanted to play for large stakes "For," Tagore had said in his inimitable vein with a delightful eye-twinkle, "the spinning-wheel may, indeed, create yarns, but how on earth it is going to create *swaraj*—and that within a year or thereabouts—is to me dark as a lampless, moonless night I am not joking," he had added quickly "For it cannot possibly call to the soul as a message has to —for instance, whether you agree with Vivekananda or no, *his* was a message—a drum-beat inviting you to sacrifice, to stake your all Those who think that the spinning-wheel can spur you on similarly do not understand the rudiments of human psychology Suppose you, a born leader, sound a clarion-call the majority may turn a deaf ear, but a handful will follow—provided it is a call not to play safe, mind you But how, on earth is the spinning-wheel going to prove such a great call? Spin, spin, spin—just pronounce, the word thrice and tell me honestly does your pulse beat a thought faster? Do you not feel deflated, if not actually betrayed?" I have not misquoted Tagore he did say these words and write to me

even more—which I would rather not quote—and I know Subhash, too, thought likewise Could it be otherwise? Was it really possible for a sane man, eager to do or die, really to believe that the spinning-wheel was going to survive save as an historical relic in our future national museums? But I am divagating—since this is not my line nor what I would underline Politics I dislike and that is all there is to it Let all shed their life-blood for politics, I can only shed mine for the Divine, and the mystic art My point is that, even when Subhash wanted to convert me to his view that politics was worth while, he did not press an advantage he could have eassily gained if only he had been a shade less conscientious Does not that prove my contention that he had never been moulded in the clay of the intolerant all-to-the-one-fold-ism of the Fascist philosophy?

But to take up the thread where I left it

FOUR

My nascent enthusiasm for debates preparatory to "saving the country" with Parliamentarian word-play (so admired by all who matter!) petered out soon enough Even my mentor's inexhaustible energy failed to go on raking up a fire unreplenished by the heart's fuel I think Subhash had been, initially, a trifle disappointed by my lack of ardour But probably he came to realise in time that, to make good, a debater was to be as much *born* as a poet or a musician In any event, he exhorted me no more to flower out into an orator Possibly he was persuaded eventually that it would be more rewarding to make his mark first in our College debates with his captivating personality, shining eyes and robust

Schwaermerei, stringing together flamboyant phrases in a foreign tongue Poor Dilip amiably collapsed, to be resuscitated nevermore I suspect my friend then took a sudden pity on me because the mother in him woke up when he saw the plight to which his innocent friend and protege was brought, inevitably, by his insistence This element of motherliness in him had always been a salient feature of his character He had been born with a pronounced streak of tenderness in his composition—or, shall I say, a sympathetic indulgence for the weak who turned to him? It brought him strange colleagues if not bedfellows roughs and rogues and parasites flocked to him and had only to squeak in a famished accent to be accepted at their face value It is well-known how some of his best friends betrayed him secretly to the C I D which got the most damning evidence against him, thanks to such traitors But even these were always quartered by Subhash whenever they were in desperate straits In fact Subhash was always an *annadata* (giver of bread) to an army of molly-coddles and adventurers Of course these were not the only ones who exploited him The deserving ones, too, were cared for no less For instance, political detenus, many of whom were really noble souls, seldom appealed to him in vain He had them always in his mind and he did all he could to relieve the miseries of their derelict families I had to organize a few music concerts in aid of these and for this Subhash was so absurdly grateful to me that it sometimes actually tickled me he would take it almost as a personal favour And one of the reasons of his exaggerated recognition of such service as I could render to the cause of his heart was his knowledge of my rooted dislike of politics and politicians, generally speaking I used often to tell him, half

in jest, that I could never bring myself to belive that he might ever shape into an authentic "country-saving" politician and I would add "You, Subhash, could never thrive on dishonesty, for if you told a lie you would be found out in no time Such country innocents are not cut out for diplomacy and bluff" Nor was he born politician, to whom all ideals were at best bubbled illusions, still less was he a go-getter, who turned out neat compliments by the dozen to arrrive That is why when, in later life, he tried to pay compliments he did not mean he always bungled For all that he was by composition robust—he was not merely boasting when he said in Burma that he never could "admit defeat under any circumstances"* And he was essentially honest, besides; that was why he felt like a derelict when his friends decided that all was lost, as for instance when the Congress had rusticated him for three years. He could have retrieved his position fairly easily if he had been a real diplomat But he never had been, I repeat, an adept in the art of lying or pretending He was by nature too reserved if not shy—even gawkish This may sound somewhat curious so late in the day—especially after the Burma episode where he erupted into the white glare of romance intensified almost into mythical lime-light, but still I must insist that he was *not* a man who longed for or doted on publicity No wonder, he always cut a sorry figure in a party tussle

I know how much he had suffered, because I know how flaming was his enthusiasm when he had come back from Europe in 1921 He did then believe, with every fibre of his being, that spiritual truth and patriotism were but different aspects of the same Divine For at that

*Last special Order of the Day dated 24-4-1945

time he had a truly mystic outlook which had enabled him to transcend his country That vision, alas, got blurred —progressively To expect otherwise would perhaps be folly The task to which he had dedicated himself heart and soul was derived from a conscience born of an idealism too impatient for fulfilment

FIVE

I can never orget a long conversation we had one evening in Subhash's Elgin Road house I will try to reproduce it from memory I can't guarantee the report's faithfulness in detail but it will be substantially true

We were sitting on a terrace The sun had just set and now stars began to bud here and there

"Dilip," Subhash suddenly said after a sudden lull in our conversation, "I sometimes feel so lonely You can't imagine, *how* lonely!"

"Subhash," I said softly, "may I tell you something?"

He only gave me a look and nodded

"I have never presumed to advise you," I said, "rather I usually look up to you for advice. But may I suggest that the loneliness you complain of is an ailment human flesh is born to—you can never shake off your sense of human bankruptcy till you learn to lean on Divinity in some form or other?

"I know what you mean," he said after a reflective pause. "I know because I too have had the seeking you refer to Yes," he dropped his voice, "I too once wanted to petition Divinity as a conscious Boon-giver to our orphaned Humanity—but of course I could not persist. I could not be deaf to the miseries of our teeming millions. India calls to me—in my blood"

Here at once he struck the note of the authentic mystic, deifying a peninsula into a Goddess I was touched He went on "I have told you many a time that I have often felt like running away—'far from the madding crowd,' as Gray has it And I too have been visited by mystic experiences though perhaps not of the kind which, if your claim is right, effects a lasting change in our outlook But then " he added more reflectively, "I don't know I wondered whether the contemplatives really meant anything as serious as their henchmen claimed For mystics came and mystics went but didn't Man go on for ever—if you will allow me to alter the quotation to suit the context? So I harked back I did, because well, I wondered whether it would not be wrong to go on, unheeding not lending the needy a helping hand "*

"But *could* you help, really, till you

"Arrived?" he helped me out, smiling "You are fond of quoting Narad's saying in the *Bhagavat* that a man could not possibly help others when he himself was

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* Years later, he wrote in his beautiful autobiography "While I lay in bed the great War broke out As I lay in bed in 1914, glancing through the papers and somewhat disillusioned about Yogis and ascetics, I began to re-examine all my ideas and to revalue all the hitherto accepted values Was it possible to divide a nation's life into two compartments and hand over one of them to the foreigner, reserving the other to ourselves? Or was it incumbent on us to accept or reject life in its entirety? The answer that I gave myself was a perfectly clear one If India was to be a modern civilised nation, she would have to pay the price and she would not by any means shirk the physical, the military problem Those who worked for the country's emancipation would have to be prepared to take charge of both the civil and military administration Political freedom was indivisible and meant complete independence of foreign control and tutelage The War had shown that a nation that did not possess military strength could not hope to preserve its independence." (*An Indian Pilgrim*, Chapters VI & VII)

in the coils of a serpent* I admit the force of the simile. For, do what we will, we can only see a few steps ahead the rest is darkness I see your point Nevertheless, my dear Dilip, one can't sit by, can one? If one can't shake off the serpent-coils of Karma one must trudge along somehow carrying them clinging around one's neck, if only to do one's bit even when one was not a master of one's own destiny. But perhaps, it is not a case of argument at all There is a fatality in things, as Napolean used to say Anyhow it is idle to deny that things seldom turn out in conformity with human logic. So, I have taken to politics and activism Could I do otherwise?"

"On that questions none but you yourself can adjudicate," I said, undecided "It is not my function to counsel you either I can only repeat what I have told you so often—that politics is not *your* line You are too decent, unsophisticated No wonder you feel lonely when most of your associates are what they are"

"There you are perhaps right," he said more complacently. "But you know my views I can't be an escapist and retire in peace in an ivory tower, like you"

"That's not a kind word, Subhash," I said wincing But I can't complain as I criticise you much more ruthlessly So, let's not discuss philosophy But don't you think that the loneliness you are speaking of is irremediable in *your* milieu?"

"I wonder" he paused and then added "But the trouble is that our country does need sefless servants. And can you have a harvest of selfless workers when you only sow seeds of selfishness and prudence?"

But that's just it," I retorted "You can't bring in

Kathamanyamstu gopayet sarpagrasto yathaparam

a *Ram-rajya* of unselfishness with an army of selfish ministers and unscrupulous opportunists. How then would you solve the problem?"

"But the problem of problems, Dilip," he evaded, "is not that of self Perhaps, in the last analysis, self is too deep-rooted in human nature to be completely eradicated. The problem is, you can't make a man love such a thing as his country when this love has not been brought to birth in his make-up *

He went on, after a pause "How often have I not seen young men come with a genuine aspiration to sacrifice their all for the country, burning to emulate the martyrs to start with! But for how long? Only till they get a safe start and secure a good job As soon as this is assured, alas, they become turn-coats overnight, out to stabilise their worldly position! When you see this over and over again, tell me, don't you catch yourself wondering whether all professions of serving the country were not mere masks which hid for the nonce the greedy faces of careerists at worst and safety-seekers at best?"

"Is it really as bad as that?" I asked, a little startled.

"It is an under-statement, I assure you. For I have seen even men of real worth with little to lose behave

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* Apropos, he wrote to Deshbandhu C R Das from Cambridge on 16-2-1921

"You are today the high-priest of the festival of national service in Bengal—that is why I am writing this letter to you. Echoes of the great movement that you have launched in India have reached here through letters and newspapers The call of the Motherland has thus been heard here also A Madrassi student from Oxford is suspending his studies for the time being and returning home to start work there Not much work has so far been done at Cambridge although a lot of discussion is going on on 'non-cooperation' I believe if one person can show the way there will be people here to follow in his footsteps" (*An Indian Pilgrim*, p 181)

like a *gaddalika-pravaha,*† to exploit the current simile. The rut, the rut! They love the beaten track above everything else, and when they do, it spells—you know what?"

"Disaster?"

He nodded, pulling a long face "For you can't work successfully to get your counrty free with a regiment of poltroons who are not only scared stiff to stake the *dhruva** for the *adhruva,*‡ but who actually shape into parasites a safe job, a fat salary and then the eternal, faultless groove of complacent mediocrity That is why I feel so *forlorn* sometimes, to use perhaps a strong word" He smiled ruefully

I kept silent The night of pain was deepening, as it often happened wheh he was in a reminiscent mood

"I have seen young men who enthused over the dream of the country's liberation," he raced on "I don't think they were born hypocrites, mind you. They gushed with a fervour which was, to start with, far from mere pretensions I mean the flame was genuine enough when they testified to rts glow"

"But," he sighed, with a wry smile, "the ardour was quickly damped, the fire petered out Only the quenchless love of solid security and feathering one's own nest survived 'Never subscribe a penny more than you could spare,' becomes their *mantra*, you know [illegible]. It is not in such a spirit of self-regarding, calcul[illegible] dence that you can serve your country And in a country like ours, which is a veritable continent of irreconcilable tangles, one has to learn to aspire one-pointedly, [illegible]g the cost But our youths mature quick-

† Literally, a wave of sheep, figuratively, as here, it means following the herd unthinkingly

* Certainty

‡ Uncertainty

ly into hard-boiled wiseacres of admirable foresight and flawless sobriety And thereafter, alas, they won't budge an inch out of their orbit of 'safety-first'!"

This was one of his constantly recurring dirges in his later years of growing disillusionment, that is why I have, somewhat reluctuntly, dragged an unpublished tragedy to the light of day

But this was not his only tragedy, not by a long way. His life was halted, at every turn, by deepening frustration, so much so, that even his faith in optimism was all but sapped, especially after his Tripuri debacle, when he was so unjustly treated by Mahatama Gandhi and his lieutenants But I am sailing too near the wind, edging politics Apropos, I feel tempted to quote a relevant extract from a letter the famous intellectual, Lowes Dickinson, wrote to me in 1931, in reply to a question of mine (What the question was will be obvious from his vindication of the League of Nations whose mountain of labour, I had complained, did not even produce the proverbial mouse) I quote it as I found his tempered optimism sincere

After answering my pointed question about mysticism he wrote "To turn from these things to more practical ones When one enters into politics, one enters the region of passion, interest, prejudice, and at last, fighting, which, however it begins, always ends in the destruction of all that was best and most generous in those who perhaps inaugurated it. I have heard of course from every side the kind of criticism you bring against the League of Nations It is a most imperfect document. But its imperfection represents that of the nations and peoples who framed it, or, by their mere presence in the background, caused it to be framed as it is, and not other-

wise. To say it is *bad* is to say what is true that political mankind *is* bad But political mankind will not be much better by scrapping all the poor stuff it tries to do, and crying for the moon—that is, a different humanity If one is working for that latter, it must be by other than political means, or, if one adopts political methods, one must cut them according to the cloth of the *now* existing mankind Yours sincerely, G Lowes Dickinson, Cambridge"

I quote this also because Subhash liked it very much though he added (with his touching optimism) that political remedies could herald a new era of a better type of humanity (And I would tell him of the prayer of St Joan in Shaw's great drama "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?")

SIX

The next episode I can vividly recall has made history an English Professor of the Presidency College was thrashed for manhandling a student But as Subhash thought fit to write at some length about the incident in his autobiography (Chapter VIII) I need hardly go into details Suffice it to say that (to quote from Subhash's account) "Mr O. did receive one solitary stroke from behind. His assailants—those who felled him—were all in front of him and on the same level with him."

But I didn't know about it at all at the time Nor did Subhash speak to me about it afterwards describing what had happened All I knew was that when the student was manhandled (for the second time, Subhash writes, p 68) it was he who took the initiative in appeal-

ing to the Principal of the College to bring Mr O. to book But he took no action and so the fat was in the fire we had a presentiment that something was brewing though what it was exactly none knew till, of course, the pent storm burst Before that we only saw Subhash flit past our College corridors with a flushed face But he had not taken me into his confidence as he did not wish to get me involved in it all It was like him In fact, he had taken the help of the minimum number of students to give a hiding to Mr O I was startled, one fine morning, to read in the papers an account of the sound hiding given to the haughty John Bull And, of course, all could see the hand of Subhash in it Personally, I never quite liked the idea of assaulting in a body a man who had not even been forewarned So my heart could not applaud Subhash as the ringleader. But I could not help admiring, subsequently his attitude. He never let anybody down He simply accepted the responsibility of the leader even though they could prove nothing definite against him *

Still he could have got off scot-free if he had just said in public (they wanted only that much, to save their faces) that it was "morally wrong" to assault the Professor But he calmly asserted that the students had given their foreign castigator fisticuffs "under a great provocation" It was for this uncompromising stand that he was finally rusticated from the University He gave a smile, but it was a nonchalant smile he blamed none

This incident "translated" him into a hero overnight. Henceforward he was of course a marked man—to be

* It came to light subsequently that Subhash had not actually belaboured the offender

constanly persecuted by the police as an arch-conspirator, criminal and what not

Naturally, henceforth I saw less of him as he never "darkened" our College, as some martinets of high rectitude put it, which made us all furious again, and my heart bled for his loneliness But at the time I was too busy with music to be able to keep in touch with him (After a few weeks he went back to Cuttack, to his father)

It was after he had passed B A with first class honours in philosophy that he visited me again It was an unexpected call I was preparing to sail for England to sit for the I C S and qualify simultaneously as a barrister in London I had decided also to take the Mathematical Tripos Subhash confided to me that he was likely to follow suit—to sit for the I. C S Could I secure for him a seat in a Cambridge college ?

I could hardly believe my ears !

"You, Subhash ! *You* propose to sit for the I C S !!"

He only gave me a cryptic smile for an answer I nursed a hurt till about a year later when, in Cambridge, he decided to draw me and a few others into his confidence he had had to sit for the I C. S , because otherwise he would not have been sent by his father to England So he had taken a secret vow to resign his post—in case he passed, of course

It was certainly a singular course or procedure, not only spectacular but bordering on the romantic But romance, too, has to be paid for At any rate his had a ruinous effect on my long-cherished ambitions in that I had almost insomnia for a brief spell To put it in a nutshell, how could I go in for the I C S after that ? I had not even the excuse of a father to plead, nor a guar-

dian who could compel me to sit for the I C S I was a free-lance, free to chalk out my dream path, with a considerable legacy to fall back on in case my dreams were shattered Besides, I had helped to get him admitted to our college, and harbouring a lion had its disadvantages, to put it mildly To cut a long story short, the contagion of Subhash's forceful personality might well have made me outpetal into a patriot had I not at this time met Romain Rolland and Bertrand Russell Subhash had at that time no soft corner for Rolland who was yet to write his book on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda But he could not help admiring Russell's robust and sound thinking although his admiration was not one-tenth as vivid as mine

But I am anticipating For this was, chronologically, a later development of mine *after* Subhash had left Europe For it was only then I really came to be influenced by Russell's international outlook and Rolland's dislike of parochial patriotism So long as Subhash was on the spot I could not raise my rebellious head In Sanskrit there is a beautifully descriptive word, *mantroushahdiruddhavirya*—that is, a snake whose venomous instincts are numbed into harmlessness by the power of a *mantra*, incantation and so were my self-will and pugnaciousness tamed by the magic proximity of Subhash And not mine alone, I can hardly recall a Bengali in England who didn't openly or tacitly accept him as the natural leader of our set Even non-Bengalis began to warm up to him when it was made public that he would resign But I had better record here some revealing details about his Cambridge life It was interesting to watch his reactions to European civilization

SEVEN

I have said that Subhash was a born patriot and a man of action The *tamasic* inertia had always been abhorrent to his questful, vital, dynamic personality Temperamentally, he admired ever so many traits of the English character their energy, love of dicipline and natural penchant to act in concert—*esprit de corps,* as he loved to put it * He was wont to cull his phrases from the military dictionary This must appear the more significant in the light of subsequent events of his life when it became more and more obvious that he simply rejoiced in fighting against tremendous odds Born with a magnificent vitality, he loved to squander possessions So it was that he thrilled in debates, studying the driest of European diplomacy and reading the lives of absurd nonentities who " strutted and fretted" their brief hours on the hustings of politics, to be "heard of no more" I did the same in my own small way I hobnobbed with aritists of dubious reputation, read meaningless plays, wasted my time thumping on the piano and devoured English dramas, Russian novels and French love-lyrics He did not like this and constantly frowned upon me "Why must you waste your precious time in trivialities, Dilip?" he rebuked me again and again I dared not reply For when Subhash came out to roar in protest there were few hearts leonine enough to outroar him Besides, had he not passed the I C S. in eight months, secured record marks in the essay paper and blossomed out into an indomitable debater! He did command homage Admira-

* In a letter from Cambridge (12-11-1919) he wrote "People here have a sense of time, and there is method in all they do Many are their defects but one must bend one's head to their merits "

tion also: he was always so tidy, never left a book lying on a sofa or a deep couch, as we, the care-free, always did. His files were all neatly docketed; his shelves scrupulously cleaned, his ward-robe never in dearth of clean stiff collars and suitable ties, his books always in their proper places, his dress, though not showy, always faultless, none could claim to have ever having seen his trousers without their neat creases, never did his coat betray an accidental stain or give a frayed appearance. To me it was madness even to think of "behaving in Rome as the Romans did"—a favourite motto of his. No, I felt myself sane only when I behaved as an Indian first and last, no matter where I was stationed. It may sound paradoxical, yet it will be true to say that Subhash, though an Indian to the core, was least Indian when he flashed as a flawless patriot. For his ruling passion was to give India a good name. "India too, like England expects every man to do his duty" was another favourite copy-book maxim of his which sounded strangely living and meaningful when his vibrant voice furnished its commentary.

"And, above all, never court the company of women—no playing with fire if you please!" was another edict. And we all obeyed him in spite of ourselves whenever he commanded! I will give a few personal instances.

I had been fond from childhood of sitting cross-legged. Before Subhash's arrival in Cambridge I often put on my *dhoti* in my lodgings at night and sat huddled up—in an *asana*—just as we do in delightful India. Subhash one day looked in and was duly scandalised. "You mustn't, Dilip!" he protested, "no, not even behind closed shutters. For beware, murder *will* out!"

Another instance. I was given to talking somewhat

loudly, with gesticulations "It's not done here," said Subhash the impeccable "So you must learn to talk in a stifled voice and don't, for mercy's sake, fling your hands about like lassos"

This was indeed an ideal difficulty for me to live up to But I gulped down my resentment and prepared to "follow the leader" For he *was* our leader And didn't he say "Let your one ambition be to leave behind an impression here of flawless spruceness, for these insular people lack imagination and can never separate the chaff from the kernel of culture"

"Why then try to make an impression on such muddle-headed philistines?" I riposted, half-angry, half-amused by his inferiority complex *

But he never suspected this he called it superiority "We must prove it home to them that we can more than hold our own against them We must beard the lion in his own den"

Such was his challenge I won't criticise it as it has its points I will only state that it could never be mine But whatever my own views, his inferiority complex was not easily visible except to a small group of lynx-eyed observers (I was not one of these initially, as I was put wise to it *after* he had left Europe) To the rest he always loomed as a "big man", Some even claimed he was already "great", Only a handful, mostly jealous never-do-wells, dubbed him an arrogant prig. But, naturally, these never counted in our estimation And Subhash, though anxious to impress the English, just ignored his

* He overcame this afterwards but at this time he had not yet come to suspect that it wasn't a superiority complex which had prompted him to write: 'What gives me the greatest joy is to watch the white-skin serving me and cleaning my shoes" (Letter dated 12-11-1919, Cambridge).

compatriots Perhaps here I am doing him an injustice. For it is possible that he was so obsessed with the problem of India's political freedom that he had no time to think of analysing his 'complexes' Besides, he looked down on his Indian critics as born to a "slave mentality" Aglow with an incandescent love of freedom, he paid scant courtesy to the views of those who had never missed freedom He loved to quote a sigh of C R Das. "The pity is," as the great leader had once said to our beloved novelist Saratchandra, "I have had to tilt even more with my own countrymen than with the English when I preached *Swaraj*" Sparks flew from Subhash's eyes whenever he repeated this In English he used often to hum a famous line of Rabindranath

Aye, life and death wait on my feet like slaves
And my mind no dark misgiving ever depraves *

Single-mindedness compels respect because the rag-tag-and-bob-tail are anything but single-minded Subhash's charactor, even in his temporary intolerances or aberrations, did not forfeit its impressiveness because round about us we spotted none who could come anywhere near him in stature or one-pointed ardour—specially in our college days in England There was, indeed, a few brilliant students and sombre book-worms, but, when all is said and done, there is something rather pathetic about such feckless creatures You may admire them but you cannot *respect* them And then, here was Subhash who had never crammed and yet beat the crammers in their own game, without turning a hair! No wonder we had all been overawed.

**Jibana miritya payera bhritya chitta bhabana-hin.*

EIGHT

I would have hesitated to refer to an imperfection of Subhash's character had he not corrected it subsequently when he became wiser though a sadder man I mean his strong antipathy to people whom he ealled 'immoral', to say nothing of pleasure-seekers and epicureans whom he regarded as beneath contempt I well remember a poet friend of mine of whom I used to be particularly fond He sometimes drank heavily and had not a vestige of reputation to lose Subhash simply cut him dead in case he accidently met the unregenerate in a party He often rebuked me for retaining a soft corner in my heart for "that impossible fellow!" How can you possibly stand him?" he would hiss with such a gesture of disgust that I dared not adduce arguments why the fellow might be dubbed perfectly "possible"

Years later, suddenly, Subhash called on me one morning at my Calcutta residence "Dilip, I have come to ask a favour"

"Fire away!" I said, thrilled

"X is disintegrating He is a fine fellow but this drink habit—you know what I mean Didn't I always insist it was dangerous for us, Indians, to drink even moderately? Look at X you remember how he used to mouth the highbrow slogans of the silly tyros of Western culture like 'One mustn't have a prejudice against drinking since drinking isn't synonymous with getting drunk"—and all that sort of rot! O Dilip, Dilip, how often have we not seen our brilliant young hopefuls split like frail oysters on this treacherous rock of intemperance! X is only a case in point"

"An unexceptionable tirade But where do I come in?"

"Please don't make fun of me I am serious—and sad, to boot I want you to see more of X Give him your company and help him He must be weaned from this ruinous habit—by hook or by crook"

The hard school of life had by then taught him the wisdom of charity and tolerance But I must add here that a deeper reason was that he had come under the great and chastening influence of the incomparable C R Das Apropos, I am reminded of a remark of his which did have a twang of unconscious humour

It was in 1924, I think, a few months before the passing of Deshbandhu We two were discussing love in whispers I was sad and anxious So he had to outdo me in wisdom

"Yes I understand," he whispered pulling a long face, "for in prison I read all the extant Vaishnava literature about love"

"Bravo, Subhash!" I chortled "Isn't it refreshing to know of the headway you have made overnight wading through book-lore! Dare anyone contend still that a child can't outvie an adult?"

But to go back to cambridge

NINE

I have mentioned that I helped to get Subhash a seat in our Fitz William Hall though not without difficulty It happened like this

I had arrived in London in June 1919 and was admitted in the Fitz William Hall which subsequently became a regular college Subhash wired to me that he

was coming and sought admission in a college at Cambridge I moved heaven and earth, but, unfortunately, the few seats allocated to Indians had been filled already At long last, with help of friends, I could get him admitted in our Hall For this Subhash was almost absurdly grateful to us all He never took a friendly service as a matter of course, albeit his heart was usually chary of betraying his gratitude But those who have, like me, basked in the radiance of his warm friendship could find thereafter little delight in testimonies of the effusive brand He imperceptibly improved one's taste as it were I myself was inclined to giving the rein to my emotion and admiration Not Subhash—although he was never unsympathetic "You are an artist, Dilip," he would often tell me half-mockingly "So you can afford to thrive on the exhibition of your emotions Not we, the lesser fry—we have to inhibit "

Somehow, whenever he spoke thus, lightheartedly, we felt exceedingly elated, some almost looked upon it as a favour, really For Subhash carried about with him such a high and aloof moral aureole that we all thrilled to come within the aura of his indulgence even though we had often, alas, to pay dearly for such thrills For instance, we relapsed directly afterwards into frivolous talk, ribald jokes and what not, if only to shake off the sense of cramp which his propinquity usually engendered in the likes of us Let me give an instance by way of illustration

TEN

There was among us a Punjabi youth—let's call him Singh—who lived *a la Boheme,* indulged in wisecracks

galore and told brave bawdy stories He didn't stick at stooping even to blatant vulgarity But as it was considered *de rigueur* among us, young iconoclasts, to hold nothing sacred under the sun, we held our heads high, flaunting our emancipation and consequent superiority to genteel ways of talk So even when we disliked Singh's aggressive flippancy, we *had* to pretend to the contrary, the more so as we never knew how to cope with his smuts

Suddenly, the remedy came to us like manna from the skies, and a very simple remedy at that Subhash's protective presence For Singh would become almost tongue-tied and shy the moment Subhash materialised. Not that the *enfant terrible* didn't strain to poohpooh the 'Puritan', as he called him behind his back, but do what he would, he couldn't so much as open his mouth to achieve a *double entendre* Once he told me ruefully that he could not explain it

' What?" I asked

'This my feeling so impotent before Bose The fellow simply acts like a bit between my grinning teeth and daredevil tongue, ha, ha, ha!"

We were all more impressed than ever For Singh cordially disliked Subhash because he had despised him from the very start It was loathing at first sight—with Subhash, who didn't believe in half measures So it was only natural that Singh should itch to pay him back in his own coin And he might have—if only he could have brought to bear his native brass and gift of the gab But try ever so hard as he would, he never could bring off a single funniment about cocottes and debauchees and sly pimps and reticent virgins in the presence of that 'awful prig!"

I sometimes thought, in those days, that Subhash could thus overawe people because he looked so relentlessly high and mighty when not in a mood to unbend or relax Also, he was never garrulous In debates, indeed, he took part enthusiastically, but he never indulged in gossip He used sometimes or criticise people harshly enough in all conscience but always succinctly. Gossip for gossip's sake was utterly repugnant to his refined and upright nature

And he never talked of women, far less mixed with them—in England, at all events Only one English lady he came to conceive a real affection and esteem for Mrs N R Dharamvir Let me try to portray a little his relationship with her

But before I introduce her I may say, by way of preface, that I would, often enough, drag Subhash to some of my friends whose company, I thought, he would profit by while in England He came to fulfil my expectations subsequently, almost always, even though I had to take him in tow sometimes under protest Once, for instance, I took him to the house of a hospitable friend of mine, Mr Bates, who became his life-long friend I cannot resist the temptation of quoting from a letter of his which is nothing if not revealing It was addressed to his brother Sarat Chandra Bose who was to achieve fame subsequently as one of the ablest lieutenants of Bengal's great leader, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das

"I am here the guest of Mr Bates," he wrote in 1920, from Leigh-on-sea in Essex Mr Bates represents English character at its very best He is cultured and liberal in his views and cosmopolitan in his sentiments He counts among his friends Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Irishmen and members of other nationalities He

takes a great interest in Russian, Irish and Indian literature and admires the writings of Ramesh Dutt and Tagore . I have been getting heaps of congratulations on my standing forth in the competitive examination But I cannot say that I am delighted at the prospect of entering the ranks of the I C S A nice fat income with a good pension in after-life—I shall certainly get Perhaps I may become a Commissioner if I stoop to make myself servile enough Given talents, with a servile spirit one may even aspire to be the Chief Secretary to a provincial Government But, after all, is Service to be the be-all and end-all of my life? The Civil Service can bring one all kinds of worldly comfort, but are not these acquisitions made at the expense of one's soul? I think it is hyprocrisy to maintain that the highest ideals of one's life are compatible with subordination to the conditions of service which an I C S man has got to accept "*

ELEVEN

Mrs Dharamvir, born of English parents in Russia, spoke both Russian and French and initiated me in Russian and French songs She was married to Dr Dharamvir, a Punjabi physician, and they settled in Lancashire where the doctor diligently built up a large practice Again I persuaded Subhash to pay them a visit in 1921, when we stayed with them in great joy He was charmed by Mrs Dharamvir and called her "didi" (sister) Warm-hearted by nature, he was overwhelmed by her beautiful personality and flawless hospitality She was the one English woman in England to whom he had ever opened himself emotionally I deem it worthy of

* Chapter IX, "At Cambridge," *An Indian Pilgrim*, p 95

mention as Subhash never found it easy to abdicate his reserve in any give-and-take with the fair sex He was unaccountably stiff with them—although, after his return from England, he slowly schooled himself so as not to keep them quite at arm's length and, in the dust and din of life, grew to appreciate the rejuvenating power of feminine contact and goodwill But there he drew the line his almost ascetic aloofness precluded, first and last, any emotional response except to his nieces whom he dearly loved even when they grew up But to return to his life in England

He used, often enough, to warn us—by "us" I mean a few of his friends in whose future he was interested—against "the two formidable temptations of this so-called European culture wine and women" He seldom smiled on a man he saw responding with alacrity to feminine charms And this disapprobation acted on different people in different ways There was a rich young lady-killer who was thus successfully curbed by his frowns and it is easy to recall authentic Bohemians who dared not dally with virgins of easy virtue simply because he would have no truck with those who transgressed wilfully

But among us, young hopefuls, there were other types as well In some, for instance, presided a die-hard Puritan who longed to behave brusquely with women barring the pleasure of calling them "gates of hell" Others simply steered clear of them, dubbing them wily assaulters of masculine chastity And, lastly, there were the timid sort who longed for gay women's society, chid themselves for it and, withal, never could have the will to shun them All the three categories turned up to tap Subhash as the one source to draw strength from.

Those who could not agree that such austerity was rewarding, either admired him for his austere life of purity, or else looked upon him as an intersting freak For they saw none in England who could rival him in such unswerving asceticism In Subhash's case they marvelled chiefly at his will-power, the more so as women ached to come near him not only because he was virile and handsome to a degree, but also because he was as good as unapproachable often felt that Subhash liked such longing on their part though never for the cheap thrill of tantalising them I theorised that what titillated him most was not their vital desire but its transformation into admiration plus despair which one so often feels for something unattainable or beyond one's reach Of course we, the lesser fry, could never win a similar admiration from the fair sex, because they could tell with half-an-eye that keeping aloof from them was not, with us, a spontaneous consequence of our will to chastity We could at best ape Subhash, that is imitate his ways gawkishly, for who dare achieve his heights of anchorite aloofness? In a word, he was a man you could not easily follow and yet longed desperately to emulate

The result was—at least as often as not—that whenever he chose to behave like the rank and file he would cast a spell, moving us to the depths The reason, we decided judicially, lay in his obvious immunity from the ordinary human weaknesses, though years later I was somewhat shocked to discover that aloofness did not necessarily connote strength One can be aloof because one is afraid to be intimate But we did not at the time, know enough of human nature and so could not help but take things at their face value Anyhow, to us

Subhash was always a citadel of strength, a lighthouse of purity

Consequently, when he responded to human emotions like an ordinary human, the latter could not help but feel highly flattered

It was a few months after our departure from the Dharamvirs Subhash had just resigned from the I C S , which had caused such an unprecedented stir in England and Bengal Dr Dharamvir who was a patriot and a bosom friend of Lala Lajpat Rai, the lion of the Punjab, came almost to adore him Mrs Dharamvir was in a somewhat ticklish position For, though she had the warmest sympathies with our Indian aspiration for political freedom, she found it hard, as an English woman, to relish her husband's constant flings at her "imperialist" countrymen Subhash, who had conceived a deep regard for her, managed to fend of his darts, which understanding consideration on his part had endeared him not a little to Mrs Dharamvir, so much so that when he sailed home she was genuinely moved as she knew that the youthful idealist's path was not likely to be one of roses After hesitating for a while she wrote "May you be victorious, dear brother And may my compatriots be made to see reason and peace descend!" But to come to the episode

Subhash and I, after about a week's stay at their Manchester house, bade farewell and entered an empty compartment Suddenly as the train whistled, Mrs Dharamvir flung into our laps two little parcels As she was waving her handkerchief to us, I showed Subhash what they contained some fried nuts and condiments His eyes glistened "Women,' he said in a thick voice, 'will always be women "

Mrs Dharamvir had noticed that Subhash was fond of chocolates

Afterwards he wrote to this "unique" English sister, who had got under his skin, a long letter which she showed me with tears in her lovely eyes He had penned it aboard the ship he had sailed home in from England In impeccable English he wrote thanking her warmly for her sisterly solicitude for him but apologised for his faults of omission He could not express all he had felt which she mustn't take for insensitiveness For, he sighed, he could not get the better of his shyness before women no more than "a leopard could change his spots' The simile stayed in my memory because I had never suspected that Subhash could be so refreshingly conscious of his limitations For he hated nothing as he hated conventional humility and self-pity So he never apologised before women for his defects—like tongue-tiedness or awkwardness Only one instance must suffice

In London I lived once with a French couple who had never been legally married , did not tell this to Subhash, fearing his deep disapproval So he used to visit me radiantly as usual and express his warm approval of my frantic attempt to talk ungrammatical French with atrocious fluency My teacher had been my host's charming daughter of ten I used to dandle her on my knee and play leap-frog with her She was very fond of me Subhash liked her but could never forget that she belonged to the dangerous sex I have, to this day, a photograph I got taken by her mother in which my little teacher stands between me and Subhash I used to twit him on his grim exterior He made as if he was standing beside a siren Duchess and must be on his guard with all the ascetic strength of his snow-pure character

Nearly twenty years later I invited him to meet Lila Desai, a well-known cinema-star, at our residence in Theatre Road I related to the beautiful actress anecdotes about Subhash's excessive anxiety to be "above suspicion" like "Ceasar's wife" You can't imagine my surprise, Lila," I told her, "but I do gasp to see him 'translated' like Bottom! For do I not find him actually speaking to you witout flustering, like a *normal* young man? Do you think the little daughter of my French hostess in London would ever believe were she told that he could change so radically—in a couple of years?" Subhash gave me a playful fisticuff on the spine and said "You are impossible!"

For all that, the Subhash we knew in England had a charm all his own What if he was awkward and shy and ill-at-ease *vis-a-vis* women? What if he had no truck with gossip and gair What if he spent all his leisure hours in reading impossible English orators and unreadable continental history What if he refused generally, to enjoy fine dramas and lovely operas? Was he not what he was because he *had* achieved such feats through a one-pointed self- discipline, *a la* Lenin or Cromwell? I cannot remember a single student in England who took life a tithe as seriously as he or strove as assiduously to make himself into a standard-bearer of free India Aye, all the mystic ardour in his composition he *had* mobilised and canalised to this one aim It is not everybody who can subordinate his whole life to one consuming ideal, burn his candles at both ends to serve one purpose and, lastly, dare stake his all at one last throw of the dice, especially when it is heavily loaded against himself You may criticise the wisdom of such a spoil-sport, you may differ from him in most of the

things that matter—you may even, if you like, laugh at him as a prince of cranks But you can t help taking your hat off to him if you once contact the godly fervour in him which moulded him into what he was Propriety and refinement may command the homage of the mind but sculpting one's whole life into a design conceived and worked out sleeplessly from one's childhood with unswerving discipline—no matter how big the gamble and vivid the danger—must compel the heart's admiration unless of course the man admired was a cruel dictator out only for personal power

Whether Subhash became such a dictator in the end I cannot say I did not seen much of him during the last five years of his life, nor correspond with him after August 1939 I heard rumours about his mounting ambition and getting top-heavy I heard he had started employing dubious means to gain temporary party successes I am not competent to adjudicate on such tricky questions I had neither the time nor opportunities to weigh the evidence I will therefore confine myself to what I know, that is, to what I saw and felt in him, the inspiration I received from him and the strength I know he gave to many a weakling I will be truthful, but I can be truthful only about the man, the idealist, the dreamer I saw in him, having known him through a long and unbroken span of personal intimacy for intimacy's sake—since it was never exploited to serve an ideal or purpose that was not common to both of us About his political activites I will be silent and for this reason that one can seldom see a man in his true perspective when one views him in the light of his inferior activities, inferior in the sense that they are ill-calculated to evoke the best in the hidden strands of his nature Such ephe-

meral glints often remind me of the glister of phosphorescence in that it shows him up in fortuitous crests of publicity which swiftly dissolve into dark troughs of utter insignificance

That is another reason why I am at such pains to emphasise the wide-spread impression Subhash created during his comparatively short stay in England (1919-21), because this impression had been made by the best part of his nature and not by accidents of circumstances For although it goes without saying that his resignation from the much-coveted I C S had been not a little responsible for his swift limelight fame, yet it would be a wrong assessment of his total personality to say that it was only the spectacular aspect of his patriotism that gave him the distinction he had achieved overnight There was something in his face, pensive and resolute, something in his steadfast gaze, wistful and far-away, that compelled respect Many is the time I have seen even bumptious high-brows dwindle overnight into pale non-entities under his ruthless scrutiny I have seen flighty students mind their studies to be able to serve India better There were various other kinds of reaction as well, diverse reactions which often made Subhash anxious, heart-sick I remember one young Bengali, who was at the time apprenticed to an optician He came one day to me and talked flamboyantly about having taken an "everlasting vow" to leave his hospital work just for the great privilege of being ordered about by "our heaven-sent leader" Deeply dismayed, I reported it at once to Subhash who became even more alarmed, in as much as he could not possibly venture to take in hand young hopefuls by the dozen in this off-hand fashion, the less so because his own future was uncertain, his foothold precarious So

he rushed to this young fanatic and after much effort dissuaded him from his blood-curdling resolve Subhash could be sweetness itself when he wanted to get round people as he knew how So the catastrophe was averted, only, alas, I was a loser to the tune of fifteen pounds I had to lend the run-away to rehabilitate him Of course he never dreamed of repaying, then or afterwards—when he was making packets of money—but I suppose one must pay even for the delight of redeeming sentimental bankrupts repudiated by their sensible guardians My point is that even such a dog had his day when he barked at the worldly-wise inspired by Subhash roaring about idealism and sacrifice next door

TWELVE

I will end my brief reminiscences about Subhash in England with the account of an unexpected struggle he had to go through when he had finally resigned When Subhash wrote to the authorities (to Lord Lytton, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, if my memory serves me) that he could not work under an alien bureaucracy, the high official sent for him and, after having essayed in vain to dissuade him from such hasty action, asked him why he had decided to resign

"I told him," Subhash said to me after describing the interview, "that I did not think one could be loyal to the British Raj and yet serve India honestly, heart and soul"

The news reached his father In due course a cable came from him and then a long letter from his brother, Sarat Bose The long and short of it is that his father had taken it very much to heart that he should have

acted in such a hot-blooded fashion without once consulting him Couldn't he at least wait till his return to India? Subhash wrote back that he found it impossible to take his oath of allegiance to the King of England it would be starting with an unclean slate wedded to a vow his heart loathed His brother wrote again charging him with shortening the life of his old father who was actually losing his sleep over him because, surely, he would now be arrested the moment he stepped on Indian soil, could it be conceivable otherwise when he was returning with such an openly hostile attitude to the British Raj?

I can still clearly visualise Subhash's gloomy face that morning as he showed me the letter I was distressed, but what could I say?

"What will you do now?' I asked after a long pause

"Do?' he raised his eyebrows "What do you mean?"

'You can still withdraw your resignation, you know," I said, at a venture

"How can you think of such a thing, Dilip?" he flashed back, indignantly

I could only squeak

"But your father is unwell, says your

' I know, ' he cut in and his fair face flushed, ' but if we build our ideals thinking first and last of our family happiness won t the ideals be wonderful? I am only troubled about one thing My father won't send me a penny now How shall I go back to India?"

"Subhash!" it was my turn to be hurt, "you seem to ignore the fact that I am living still And," I added with a smile, ' I have no father, you know, to come between me and drawing a cheque "

Subhash gratefully borrowed ninety pounds from me

but I was incomparably more grateful that he should have consented to do me the favour

A few weeks later he came to me one morning and said that the authorities had "traced the man behind Subhash", implying of course the accomplice who had given him "damnable financial support" at the psychological movement His face had lost its serenity when he confided this to me Of course I laughed it away, but not he The same mother in him had stirred Needless to say that I was touched by his solicitude

It got about after this little incident—thanks to gossip's power to fare on wings of ether—that the "man behind Subhash" had somehow won through to his confidence in a surreptitious way I sensed an unavowed grudge in some quarters for my having stolen a march over them For there were of course many a Subash-fan who would have loved to forestall me if only they had had an inkling that he needed help I pointed it out to him about generosity and jealousy living together under the same roof! He only laughed

But I make mention of this incident chiefly to underline that Subhash was worried over me because he was so conscientious by nature He would not have talked of having "involved" me had he not felt that I was getting more and more cynical about human nature in politics His intuition was right, of course For though I tried my best not to hurt him, he could hardly be deceived about the implication of my growing aversion to the cheap shibboleths of politics But I could not help this deepening perception which years later I felt delighted to find clearly stated as a historical fact by Aldous Huxley in his book *Grey Eminence* that "again and again have pious laymen become statesmen in the hope of rais-

ing politics to their own high moral level, and again and again politics have dragged them down to their low moral level upon which statesmen, in their political capacity, are compelled to live " But as politics and politicians are beyond the purview of my book, I will leave this unsavoury topic with just this irrepressible sigh that the more I admired Subhash the more I prayed that he might be rescued from the perfidious tentacles of political adventurers I reminded him again and again years later, when I saw him fighting with his back to the wall, that politics was not his native line, *swadharma*, but alas, he was born with an obstinate streak of rational madness the more clearly he saw that our freedom could not be won through party tussles, the more he would rationalise his failure into a kind of martyrdom He failed to see that martyrdom didn't always pay real dividends in the mart of politics where the worst instincts of man must always have a field day But let me now turn once more to the man I loved and admired, the dreamer who was an abiding inspiration in my life, since it is him I want to delineate and pay homage to—not the politician

For the man-cum-dreamer was admirable, and there cannot be the shadow of a doubt as to the hyaline glow and rocky firmness of his character, which might indeed scatter sparks when trampled on but could never be squeezed into clay His will-power, unimpaired till his last breath, is the proof of his fundamental resilience He might have been, indeed, unjust, sometimes (how many of us can claim we prefer always the ways of justice to those of our self-will?), he might have made blunders (dare any man pretend he always saw his way lying straight before him when conflicting voices called?); indeed, sometimes he might even have advocated some-

what questionable methoas to achieve certain commendable ends (but isn't that one of the subtlest ways of the diplomatic mind which adduces the most faultless arguments to defend the faultiest of cases?) But still, as I always used to say when some of his critics said bitter things against him, Subhash was born with a nature too forthright to be warped by such wrong movements because of the all-redeeming nobility of the dreamer in him Is not that why he died dreaming not of his family or defeats, nor even of the clouds that had so often blurred his vision, but of the sun of faith and courage that would free his great Goddess, his Motherland? It will be worth while to bring out what I mean when I stress this dream-weaving natrue of his

THIRTEEN

The year was 1938 We were reclining side by side in a room of the lovely house Saratchandra Bose had built in Woodburn Park, Calcutta Subhash kept on asking me random questions about Pondicherry and Yoga But, obviously, he was only playing at being interested So I suddenly stopped dead and asked him what the matter was

"Nothing," he evaded

No humbug, please,' I insisted "Why, you are simply not there!"

He then confessed it all laughing and blushing alternately (he often flushed when taken unawares, like a school-girl caught making love), and told me things about the "Congress High Command" which I would rather not quote

I did not try to console him I simply repeated what

I had foreseen that he would never make good where he didn't belong, so why not leave politics for something more convincing? I pleaded for a long time and earnestly

"You have surely done enough, Subhash," I rounded off Our *Shastras* speak of three kinds of debt a man must pay debt to his parents, debt to the sages and, lastly, debt to God You have paid the first debt with the best part of your life-blood, you have made your family famous already—so much so that even your father has changed and is now proud of you Now the time has come for you to pay your second debt"

"These sages?" he smiled I could see all too plainly that my counsel had again been a misfire

So I said, at a venture "You will have peace at least"

"Peace? But what about the debt to the country?"

"Subhash," I said, almost pleadingly, "I am reminded of a couplet in the *Mahabharat* where the great sage says

Great God has willed that things shall ripen and gloom,
In a way He has ordained
And Man must wait his hour when steeped in gloom,
As sages recommend *

You yourself are fond of quoting C R Das's famous jeremiad that one has to fight harder battles against one's own kith and kin than against the alien exploiters Our people are not ready yet for freedom They don't even strain at the leash For whatever democracy may say,

* The original Sanskrit couplet
Kalena sarvam vihitam vidhatra
Prayena yogat labhate manushyah

the commonalty can never emulate the elect, or shall I say, the choice spirits I want you to fulfil your life following your *swadharma*, to wit, the deepest call of your nature Why waste it? Come along with me to Pondicherry One who has the capacity to become a nation-builder should not fritter away his precious energy in building a futile party which cannot achieve anything worthwhile even in the best of time "

The shaft went home, unexpectedly

'I Know Dilip," he retorted "But I can't turn to Yoga branded 'defeated' by life " His lips quivered and sparks flew from his eyes

"But you are not defeated—yet On the contrary, you are the idol of young Bengal But, mark my words, the way you have chosen to tread is going to be barren in the last resort Man must wait his hour, I repeat But even if you don't want to give up the fight, can't you at least come away with me for a few months, if only to see your way clearer—to find a brighter light than you can command today?"

He wavered, but only for a brief moment, then shook his head "But no, Dilip Even that is impossible "

"May I know why?"

'Because if I go with you into even a temporary seclusion, I am afraid I may not be able to come out again into the open with the fire of the fighter in me "

He did say these words I remember them very clearly because it made me view his tragedy in a new, a deeper, light He did not care to win peace not even a truer vision, because he loved the cause of his country too dearly Although here we always differed—for I could never regard the country's cause as the highest on earth—I could not but respect his all-too-genuine

solicitude for our famished, poor and exploited India I well remember how his eyes glistened whenever I sang my father's song on Bharatvarsha (translation, Sri Aurobindo)

Mother, peace nests in thy bosom,
In thy voice Love's courage glows,
By thy hand are fed earth's millions,
From thy feet salvation flows
Deep thy joy is in thy children,
Deep thy suffering's tragic night
Mother India, great World-Mother!
O World-Saviour, World's Delight!

I refer to his deep feeling for the tragic night of India, because here one could feel the response of a mystic more vividly than that of a patriot And I maintain it was this mystic and not the patriot that made him write an autograph (dated, 23-2-1938, Vithalnagar) I chanced upon two years ago *There is nothing that lures me more than a life of adventure away from the beaten track and in search of the Unknown In this life there may be suffering, but there is joy as well, there may be hours of darkness but there are also hours of dawn To this path I call my countrymen*

I would not have taken the trouble to write all I still remember about him had I not found in him the mystic whose soul's quest through life was what he calls "The Unknown" And I believe that, although he never gave this mystic in him a chance to flower, he could not possibly have staked his all for a lessor love (since all quests are lesser than the Supreme Quest), had he not been persuaded that the lesser would eventually lead him to the Highest That is why he could thrill to India only

when the peninsula ceased to be a thing of clay and became invested with Divinity And it was this Godhead that called him imperiously through the Motherland whose heart throbbed for her children as vividly as that of a mother in flesh and blood I will even go farther and say that, if he had not been the authentic mystic he was, one would not have felt when one was near him as though one was basking in some spirit sunshine of his personality I have not only his personal friends in mind when I say this, I would include the dispossessed and the unfortunate also who were left out in the cold by cruel life Doubtless all men who bear the stamp of greatness do often shed this warmth, more or less, but it is only in the case of a mystic that this warmth can radiate pervasively outside man's little world of self As said the great mystic poet A E whom Subhash adored

> *When the Spirit wakens, it will not have less*
> *Than the whole of life for its tenderness*

Which is not to say, however, that it was only the disinherited—the insulted and the injured of the earth—who basked in the warmth of his great heart Many a stricken soul derived from his moral support just the strength one misses most in life, especially when faced by the discouragements of materialist sceptics I will make bold to give a personal illustration to attest this fortifying power of his character

I have said that I myself and a few others (like Khitish Prasad Chatterji) gave up sitting for the I C S moveed by Subhash's resolve to resign from the "heaven-born service" as he was wont to call it, sarcastically I bade farewell to Law as well Next I gave up Mathematical Tripos Part II, after having passed Part I I bade good-

bye to Law, indeed, with genuine relief, but it cost me a real pang to abandon Mathematics as I still had a lurking ambition to be titled a "Wrangler"—a silly ambition no doubt, but, when all is said and done, we all have to grow up slowly to wisdom's stature from the rather pathetic dwarfhood of folly. And it is a difficult growth, because it is not easy to recognise as foolish our faith in gilded (academic) glory. But I was called to music, a hard task-master. An idealist friend of ours, now no more (a physicist who had won distinction as an engineer in Germany, Sarat Dutt by name) came once to exhort me to "burn my boats" as Subhash had done. The shaft went home. I felt, with a pang, that I dare not claim Subhash as my friend if I went on thus, playing safe till doomsday. The only solace was that in the school of life one did, sometimes, learn even through one's worst mistakes and fears. Or, to put it in Sri Aurobindo's vibrant words in *Savitri*:

> *Our ignorance is wisdom's chrysalis,*
> *Our error weds new knowledge on its way,*
> *Its darkness is a blackened knot of light.*

So, I decided first to have a grounding in the theory of music and accoustics in Cambridge and took the Music Special. But the theory of music I found as dull as dull can be. It was the living throbbing Elysium of melody that had laid its yoke on my soul. So I passed only one part of the music special and failed in the second. I was depressed. But I had only myself to blame. I was constantly attending concerts and operas and thumping on the piano, besides striving, secretly, to compose. That wasn't the way, surely to pass a hard examination in the daedal rudiments of sound-combinations like har-

mony and counterpoint and part-singing and what not But now I wanted to have practical training in music to be able to sing the art-songs" of Germany It was Schubert Schumann Brahm and the Italian operas that beckoned to me I wanted to flower as a creative singer-So I resolved to leave Cambridge without a degree. Wouldn't that be "burning my boats ?"

My people in India were all persuaded it would be "suicidal" and so were terribly scared I cannot blame them For with all my foolhardiness I was perhaps just wise enough to know that I was not quite what I fondly believed myself to be And then was I not impulsive and mercurial enough in all conscience? I had parts, even my enemies admitted that, but, fortunately, I was not likely to fulfil my early promise—the way I was shaping, they all chuckled in delight And, all the time, my dear ones at home frantically appealed to me not to abandon the Tripos "Come back at least as a Professor in embryo if you won't become a full-fledged *pucca sahib*," they thundered and wailed alternately

But I yearned, I repeat, to "burn my boats", if only to follow in the footsteps of Subhash who had set the example of a "brave lack of foresight," as Dutt used to put it trenchantly after having come to love the youthful rebel

We stayed with him in his Golder's Green flat in London—Subhash and I—and Subhash came to conceive a genuine admiration for his virile unimpaired spirit of enterprise His admiration had not been ill-founded Had not Dutt won eminence in Germany as an engineer during the First World War, and did he not speak beautifully with inside knowledge about the creative spirit in modern science? Subhash grew to adore Dutt who, in

his turn, would be tenderness itself to his distinguished admirer He was also fond of my singing So he kept on exhorting me in his incisive style But the dead-weight of discouragements of my friends and relatives in India and England had proved too heavy to be jettisoned by my own unaided strength Suppose, I brooded, I was really, under my skin, "a view-changer" who was at the mercy of catch-words and battle-cries of the hour —what then? Nor could I deny that I was was prone by nature to vacillate No, I could never hope to emulate Subhash because he was built of a different clay and moulded by a will which had little kinship with mine So said my critics and counsellors, friends and relatives, unanimously

Heart-sick with indecision and misgivings, I appealed, at long last, to Subhash

"You must tell me Subhash, how I should act" I said "for I am at the parting of the ways, as you can well see"

"But I don't know anything about music, Dilip," he answered, non-committally

I took it to heart

"But I am not asking you to pronounce on or about musical technique," I insisted ' I am only asking you to tell me about your basic reaction to my ideal I want to take to music as my vocation and burn my boats, like you But while you are born with an iron will, I am dubbed a 'view-changer' as you know I want your honest and final opinion on the matter"

Subhash put a friendly hand on my shoulder

"But wny do you refer to the gibes of these worldly people, Dilip?" he said "You know very well I have little truck with those who decry idealism"

"Exactly," I said, heartened. "And you yourself told me the other day that you could never understand a mode of life in which idealism and adventure played no part."

'And I fully meant it, I assure you,' he ratified and the dreamer in him woke up at once.

"Listen Dilip," he resumed, after a brief pause. "You know I expect much of you. That is why I go out of my way constantly to nag at you so that you may not waste your time with wastrels."

"But things are not always what they seem, dear Subhash."

"Listen," he cut in. "You know very well I have little patience with psychological niceties, and I know, too, I have disappointed ever so many who dub me a 'spoil-sport.' But music—though I know very little about it—is not a sport: it is something uplifting, as I have felt, the more forcefully since I came to know you. So you can never forfeit my support, such as it is, if you take to it whole-heartedly. Only remember, you have got to be single-minded. For then only shall you have confuted your critics. Danton's dictum 'always audacity' (*toujours de l'audace*) appeals to be powerfully. I have always cordially hated the beaten track. The argument of your critics that music is unlikely to prove rewarding as a career leaves me cold. For, boiled down, it comes to this that music has not been taken up so far by our youths with anything like real seriousness. I do not know, mind you, how far music will help you in your spiritual evolution. But I think I may assure you sincerely that, when your advisers shake their heads at your resolution to take to music as a vocation on the ground that 'it is not done,' it makes my blood boil. Must we

come to England only to turn out clerks and contractors, bureaucrats and barristers—which is done? No! and of course your idealism has my full support—for music, I am persuaded, *can* be an ideal in the real sense of the term"

That decided me I left directly afterwards for Germany to have a good grounding in voice-training But that is another story I must come back to Subhash

I have dwelt at some length on this episode only to testify to the fortifying aspect of Subhash's radiant personality It is not always easy to assess the net value of what we imbibe from our environments because, although we owe a great deal to what we, often unconsciously, absorb from our circum-ambient atmosphere, we are a little too ready to claim as our own the strength that flows into us from without The reason is that we are egoistic by nature That is why ingratitude is so plentiful on earth in all climes All the same even to espy a citadel is to feel a trifle stronger especially when one is war-weary Subhash was, to many, a source of just such a spectacular strength of a veritable citadel, good even to behold When I thought of him I often recalled Chesterton's poem he loved

In a time of sceptic moths and cynic rusts
And fatted lives that of their sweetness tire,
In a world of flying loves and fading lusts
It is something to be sure of a desire

It is, indeed One meets refreshing artists, though not quite as often as one might wish One meets materialist scientists, and how often one wishes they were a little less blatantly in evidence! But when one meets a man who starts to erect the superstructure of his life on

the plinth of *one* desire, one does feel fulfilled, somehow and grateful, besides For cynics and sceptics as teachers do their best to make our ideals look like the follies of the blind We need a counterblast Subhash to me at all events, was just such a force, a bugle-call to be reckless, to aspire for courage which counts no costs It is not often that one meets a sudden lighthouse of certitude in the troubled waters of life We paid him our tribute because he could, when black winds howled act as just such a beacon

FOURTEEN

All this rhetoric may, however, be doing Subhash a kind of injustice in that those who have never known him intimately may, from my emphasis on the utter seriousness of his nature, have inferred that he had no lighter side of his nature, like a sense of humour or love of laughter I have mentioned already how genuinely he loved pure fun and care-free laughter But I have yet to bring out his sensitiveness to humour Years later he said at a public meeting that his sense of laughter and beauty grew rather slowly and in spite of himself This is not quite true to fact For Subhash, though serious enough in all conscience, had always had a pronounced streak of the childlike in him That is why he could go on replenishing his freshness for such a long time—except perhaps in those grim days when he was involved in the unhappy imbroglio with the "Congress High and Mighty Command" as he used to call that body in an aggrieved tone But even then the elasticity and resilience of his spirit never failed him—the reason why he could still go on laughing uproariously at jokes and repar-

-tees with an abandon that surprised those who knew what he had been going through at the time No mere self-control or aristrocatic pride can ever achieve this Only love of laughter can work the miracle This is by no means an overstatement "Laughter was given by the Gods to man," writes Sri Krishnaprem (alias Ronald Nixon) in his book, *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*, "and it was one of their choicest gifts No animal can laugh nor does it need to, since it lives on the harmony of the purely instinctive life It is only Man whose possession of an ego introduces stresses and strains which cannot be avoided and for the healing of which, therefore, the Gods gave him this supreme gift Time and again it will save us when otherwise all would be lost He who cannot laugh, he whose devotions are too serious for the healing waves of laughter, had better look out there are breakers ahead!" In the public meeting referred to, Subhash also said that his love of laughter might perhaps have got inhibited had it not been 'so richly nourished by Dilip's laughter" I think he exaggerated the effect I had on him All I had done was to draw him out of his shell from his too strenuously "serious devotions" and leave the rest to his natural healthy susceptibility to song and light and laughter That was why I had, sometimes, to wrench him from his dreary Dantons, gloomy Gibbons and moody Mazzinis and bring him in contact with men like Sarat Dutt, Sarat Chatterji, Krishnaprem, G V Mehta and others who had a vivid sense of humour And it worked I will give here only a sample or two of Dutt's humour, in London, which made Subhash rollick in laughter even though he was at the time under a great mental anguish thanks to family discord

Dutt had a son who was none too intelligent When-

ever Dutt spoke of him he wound up with "All fathers credit their children with matchless intelligence I wonder how then to explain the countless roaring idiots on earth, among whom the son of my grief happens to be one!"

We would all laugh heartily when Dutt perpetrated his funniments in his inimitable vein, but it was Subhash who outlaughed us all with his rollicking laughter reminding us often (as Dutt rightly said, quoting from Milton)

Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his sides

And I myself was glad of the "sport" as Subhash looked relieved the moment he reacted thus, spontaneously, to little quips and *jeus d'esprit!* One reason lay perhaps in this that unlike us, he had, since his early chidhood, walked too many blind alleys and grim deserts of life High seriousness had been almost the alpha and omega of his existence Consequently, he needed the relaxation of laughter more than the likes of us who also laughed, but not quite as unreservedly as he, at Dutt's simple jokes I recall another Dutt told us one day that he liked my music so much that often he wanted to sing away "But," he added, dolefully

I want my songs to please you all,
yet when I sing—my own
Dear self gets so crestfallen to think
my songs have made you groan!

And how Subhash would burst out laughing again —holding his sides—till he was all but breathless! It is unforgettable, his open laughter—so strong yet child-

like, self-oblivious yet never cheap I will skip a few years to depict a conversazione we had at our house in Theatre Road, Calcutta, with our famous novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterji It was in 1938, I think Subhash looked rather fagged and under the weather He was then the President of the B P C C (Bengal Provincial Congress Committee) I invited him and Sarat Chandra and a few others whom he liked I tried, from time to time, to afford him some kind of diversion in this way and usually rounded off with musical soirees which he loved On this occasion, however, it was just a friendly gathering under the auspices of our great litterateur who was a brilliant wit, to boot Subhash loved to hear him talk and called him one of the most revivifying men he had ever met I remember that day almost as clearly as I could remember thing of yesterday

Our talks began with Khaddar Sarat Chandra had then given up the homespun with a disappointment which contrasted ill with the enthusiasm of his earlier days Subhash asked him the why and wherefore of his sudden defection

"Very simple," he replied with mock gravity, "No servant would stay For the cloth, they said, they could dip in a bucket of water but never lift thereafter" (Meaning, of course, that it became too heavy)

I said, casually, when the general laughter had subsided "Let's all go out on a steamer trip in the Ganges Subhash! It is so refreshing, and you do need a change, you know!"

Subhash shot a meaningful glance at our chief guest "Well, I can take the trip only if he consents to officiate as President of the B P C C"

"I am not quite such a fool as I look, Subhash," the

other said in his inimitable vein "For don't I know what it will end in, inevitably?"

"Whatever do you mean"

"Only this that they will handcuff me and lead me away—even God does't know where, and you will all yell in chorus *Bande Mataram,* clapping behind my back, and may be pelt me with faded flowers. But the sum total isn't calculated to compensate me for a year's incarceration—and they tell me the powers that be don't supply opium in jail"

Peal after peal of bell-like laughter broke out from Subhash

But must turn to more serious things

FIFTEEN

It is well-known that on his return from England in 1921 Subhash placed himself at the disposal of the leader whom he soon came to adore Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das I read in the papers about the laurels Subhash swiftly won one after the other He was appointed the Principal of the Bengal National College and became also the Publicity Officer of the B P C C Later he was made the Captain of the National Volunteer Corps, a job very much after his heart But he was arrested in December the same year (1921) along with his beloved leader and sentenced to imprisonment for six months

I was anxious for him but of course I felt proud also When he was released I was still in Berlin learning violin and European singing in the Italian method Subhash used to write to me now and then, but only brief notes he had never felt an urge to take to writing as an art Yet I seldom received a letter then or after-

waıds whıch dıd not dısengage somethıng of hıs delıghtful streagth and abıdıng affectıon And there was always some reference or other to lıttle thıngs I had done for hım. I wıll quote a letter he wrote ın September, 1932, ın reply to one of mıne, whıhch I had wrıtten from our Ashram at Pondıcherry, to ıllustrate hıs essentıally greatful nature He was then ın the Penıtentıary, Madras, under detentıon

My dear Dılıp, your affectıonate letter of the 15th August whıch reached me on the 29th ultımo

In what you have done for me, you have acted lıke a tıue frıend and you could not have done more *

I do not know ıf I am suffıcıently 'open' to receıve yogıc-power—probably not Nevertheless, I thınk that even those who rule our a supra-mental order have to admıt the exıstence and effıcacy of what ıs popularly styled 'wıll-power' And thıs power —call ıt by what name you wıll—ıs bound to act, even ıf the receıveı ıs not 'open' or adequately and conscıously receptıve I am greatful to Srı Aurobındo

Yes, 'Madras ıs so near to Pondıcherry'—but the walls ıntervene, and that makes all the dıfference ın the world

It ıs not necessary to bother you wıth detaıls about my 'physıcal' health I don't thınk I have suffered from 'mental' ıll-health as I have been sufferıng from the physıcal—and my usual 'spırıts' aıe therefore unaffected

I have been studyıng a bıt and thınkıng more; at tımes I feel as ıf *I am gropıng ın the dark* But I

* I pause here to add, by way of explanatıon, that I had only sent hım a flower from Srı Aurobındo as a token of hıs blessıng

cannot go wrong as long as I am sincere and earnest—even if my progress towards Truth be more zig-zag than straight After all, life's march is not as straight as a straight line

Has not each of us a sphere of work allotted to us, taking 'work' in the broadest sense? And is not this sphere conditioned by our past *karma*, our present desires, etc and our environment? Nevertheless, how difficult it is to understand or realise our proper sphere of work! This sphere of work is the external aspect of our nature or *dharma* It is so easy to say, 'live in accordance with your *swadharma*'—but so difficult to know what one's *dharma* is It is there that the help of a Guru becomes so necessary—and even indispensable

I know that you will continue to feel for me and I also know that in the long run this cannot prove unavailing This is a great solace to me—no matter where I may happen to be confined I have appreciated (I cannot find the proper word!) Sri Aurobindo's action I shall not say more lest by language become conventional

With best love,

Ever affectionately yours.
SUBHASH

I have reproduced the letter in full because it gives the lie to some of his detractors who assert that he was conceited or arrogant by nature Vanity, yes It is undeniable that vanity is not exactly a quality one can afford to feel vain about Yet I have often wondered how many of us could honestly claim they would have acted more unostentatiously if they had been in his shoes! Popularity,

after a point, is always dangerous, as it feeds the fire of self-esteem which is too obstinate, alas, to be dowsed I have said that Subhash was reserved, if not shy By 'shy' I mean what, let us say, Jawaharlal was by nature, though this may sound somewhat absurd to those who would judge the indefatigable Kashmiri by his outword activities, speeches and fumings But he *is* shy by temperament, only the hammering and battering of politics have somewhat squeezed his native shyness out of him Inevitably To remain in the lime-light for a long spell must always be detrimental to shyness, and shyness—in the sense of not wishing to exhibit oneself—is essentially an appanage of true refinement of character The Subhash of maturer years could not possibly retain intact his shyness, no more than a famous artist could his reticence after having granted a million interviews to the Press and volunteered to reveal his personal reactions to all sorts of questions and problems Could any man of refinement go on talking on public platforms and exposing himself to the hawk-eyes of the Press without getting his finer sensibilities somewhat blunted in the process?

I say this not to judge Subhash of the later period but to bring out the man—the friend and the mystic—I knew and loved before he came to live and roam in the full glare of countless adoring eyes The former, I claim, was much the bigger man—or, shall I say, the thinker and mystic who had written to me from aboard the ship bound for Vienna (March 5, 1933)

My dear Dilip,

I have not written to you for a long time though you have been good enough to write to me never-

theless During the months of January and February I was passing through a species of mental torture owing to repeated pin-pricks of the Government and till at the very last moment I was not at all sure that I would be able to leave for Europe for treatment Owing to the vindictive policy of the Government it was not possible for me to meet my parents or my friends Only a few near relatives were allowed to interview me in Jubbalpore Jail Many friends came from distant places to Bombay to interview me but they had to return disappointed. The police officers who escorted me up to the boat surrounded me like a pack of hounds till the ship actually sailed from the harbour These pin-pricks which continued till the moment of my sailing from Bombay caused me intense pain

However, I do not think I should worry you with these petty affairs It was so good of you to feel so keenly for me all the time I was suffering in custody And it was so unexpected because you are supposed to have 'given up the world' and taken to Yoga To be quite frank, my dear Dilip, quite apart from Yoga and spirituality, your intensely human feeling for me has profoundly moved me That you —who are supposed to have forgotten all earthly affairs and to have taken leave of your erstwhile friends—should feel so keenly and intensely for one in my position was altogether unexpected

In one of your letters, you asked me about my attitude towards Shiva—or something to the effect To be quite frank, I am torn this side and that—between my love for Shiva, Kali and Krishna Though they are fundamentally one—one does pre-

fer one symbolism to another I have found that my moods vary—and according to my prevalent mood, I choose one of the three forms—Shiva, Kali and Krishna Of these three again, the struggle is between Shiva and Shakti Shiva, the ideal Yogi, has a fascination for me and Kali the Mother also makes an appeal to me You see, of late (i e for the last four or five years) I have become a believer in Mantra-Shakti by which I mean that certain Mantras have an inherent Shakti Prior to that, I had the ordinary rationalistic view, namely that Mantras are like symbols and they are aids to concentration But my study of *Tantra* philosophy gradually convinced me that certain Mantras had an inherent Shakti—and that each mental constitution was fitted for a particular Mantra Since then, I have tried my best to find out what my mental constitution is like and which Mantra I would be suited for But so far I have failed to find that out because my moods vary and I am sometimes a Saiva, sometimes a Shakta and sometimes a Vaishnava I think it is here that the Guru becomes useful—because the real Guru knows more about ourselves than we do —and he could at once tell us what Mantra we should take up and which method of worship we should follow

To come back to matters mundane I reach Venice to-morrow From there I proceed to Vienna to consult doctors there Thereafter I shall probably go to some Swiss sanatorium

The voyage was a fairly pleasant one up to Port Said as the sea was calm Since passing Port Said we have encountered very rough weather My

troubles (like abdominal pain) are still persisting—but nevertheless I have been feeling somewhat better Before we reached Port Said I had been feeling decidedly better but the rough weather has upset me since we entered the Mediterranean Sea

I shall stop here today as the rolling is making writing somewhat difficult

With warmest love
I am
Ever affectionately,
SUBHASH

It is worthy of note that the Subhash who spoke so loudly about himself in politics, so sure of his way, speaks here with a real humility—real in the sense that it is not put on as a social veneer Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me that real knowledge only commenced from the moment one touched the nadir of one's self-assurance. One begins to know the heart of things only when one has learned a supreme lesson of life , what we call knowledge is something very different from true wisdom which alone can teach us to steer clear of the hidden reefs and shoals in the uncharted waters of life But to come back to the letter just quoted

Sri Aurobindo commented on this (27-3-1933)
Dilip,

At Subhash's conscientious hesitations between Krishna and Shiva and Shakti I could not help indulging in a smile If a man is attracted by one form or two forms of the Divine, it is all right, but if he is drawn to several at a time he need not torment himself over it A man of some development has

necessarily several sides in his nature and it is quite natural that different aspects should draw or govern different personalities in him he can accept them all and harmonise them in the One Divine and the One Adyashakti of whom all are the manifestations

SIXTEEN

It is to bring to the fore the developed spiritual nature of the pensive activist and thereby underline his mystical possibilities that I have published Subhash's letters It is hardly necessary to comment on their sincerity so strong and, withal, so tender in its wistfulness All the same, I am tempted to draw the attention of modern votaries of Western nationalism to one sentence in his letter 'The real Guru knows more about ourselves than we do' This dictum is really the heart of Indian mysticism as is admitted by all who know anything about Indian hagiography That Subhash found no difficulty in accepting this tenet—as his early letters to his mother, too, amply testify—does bear out the essential correctness of my appraisement of his *swadharma* of the mystic I have, indeed, felt time and time again this inherent flair of the contemplative in him whose aspiration for the Yoga of Love came, alas, to be smothered progressively by the growing accretions of a life of hectic activism which he equated with *karmayoga* Some discerning critics have, indeed, inferred this deep potentiality in him from the strange but unmistakable aura of other-worldliness that protected him like an armour, but I have often wondered if even these would really believe

were they told that the outer man had won over the inner what could only be dubbed a Pyrrhic victory! By which I mean the victory which men born to a deep spiritual urge win when they manoeuvre a *paradharma* to achieve more spectacular but less convincing results than those they might have obtained had they stood loyally by their deepest *swadharma*. What happens at such times has been described by Aldous Huxley in his profound biography of a monk, entitled *Grey Eminence*. When such mystics trip, he writes, "they lose their insight and authority, and the society which it was their business to enlighten remains wholly dark, deprived of all communication with divine reality, and consequently an easy victim to preachers of false doctrines."

It is not, however, to convert the fiercely patriotic over to my persuasion—about the mystic quest of the soul being more truly creative than the political—that I stress the Yogi in Subhash who might have come into his own even in this life had he given his will to the All-transcendent, the *Paresha*, rather than the worldlings He sustains. That is next to impossible. In Bengali there is a homely proverb which says that it is possible to wake a man who sleeps but not one who feigns to be asleep while actually wide-awake. If I underline this irrepressible trend in Subhash's deeper self it is in the hope that my emphasis may win today a new and perhaps deeper significance in the light of his subsequent evolution. In other words, I would humbly submit that his political frustration would *not* have been reversed so miraculously, overnight, had he not invoked, through the sincerity of his unspoken aspiration, a Power of compassion he was always seeking but never could supplicate in total self-surrender. This

is what Vyas meant when he assured us in his great epic

Who loves the All-transcendent more than all
The World—if such a lover deviate
Through error from his Goal, he shall not fall
For his heart's high Resident shall rule out Fate *

Still this was doctoring or salvaging, if you will, but not redeeming And that is why I have always deemed it a thousand pities that the mystic in Subhash should have swerved from "the All-transcendent" For had he followed the greater call and become a nation-builder (as he was cut out to be), he would have won through in this life to the supreme fulfilment he missed for a lesser love But then, in the last analysis, which of us can forsee whither we are being led by the Lord of our destiny and through what devious ways of His *maya*? Has not the *Gita* said *nehabhikramanashosti*—"no apprenticeship in high endeavour is wasted?" Besides, who dare plumb the Wisdom of the Sphinx who pitchforks some of His devotees into deeper abysses than the rest, creates blind alleys of illusion which few can suspect till it is too late, and last, though not least, sanctions even our self-love to make the subsequent self-discovery more ravishing! To quote a Sufi theosophist

I fell in love with mine own self
and marvelled till I met in Thee
The One I'd wooed, and lo, it was
my own own personality!

* *Svapadamulam bhajatah priyasya*
Tyaktvanya-bhavasya Harih Pareshah
Vikarma yachchotpatitam kathamchit
Dhunoti sarvam hridi-sannivishtah

(*The Bhagvat*, XI-V-42)

SEVENTEEN

We cannot plumb with the intellect, that is, which is not to say that we are born helpless, totally unequipped For the truth is that it is possible to glimpse here and now a Divine Purpose working as a leaven at the heart of things, that even when we stand baffled by the inscrutable Wisdom that rules our destiny, we do meet its flying traces Indeed, hints of the Revelation may come when, rapt in our routine of dust and din, we least expect a vision of the Reality, then, lo, mystic strains are wafted to us from realms beyond our ken, rapturous calls come to plough the rocky strands of doubt and disbelief and plant seeds therein so a Love that 'passeth all understanding' may help us achieve a flowering fulfilment when all seemed lost It must have been some such call Subhash heard through the *Sadhu* whom he used to visit now and again For he writes in his autobiography (p 59) "About sixty miles from the city, there lived a young ascetic hailing from the Punjab This ascetic would never take shelter under a roof, for the ideal which he practised evidently was

> *The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed*
> *And food that chance may bring*

"I was greatly impressed by this man," he confesses without ado

And so he left his home in search of a Guru to answer the mystic call he had evidently heard in his wistful heart Had he met him then, his subsequent life might have had a very different tale to tell But, Guru or no Guru, the deathless seed (*the bijam avyayam* of the *Gita*) that had been planted in the arid soil of his adolescence did grow into a dream arbour whose nostalgic murmurs saddened

technique of his own to testify to his gratitude Sometimes, there might have been a tang of the *noblesse oblige* about his recognition—since he was nothing if not an aristocrat to the manner born— but certainly never a hint of hauteur or conventional politeness which so often makes it suspect And of course he was too proud to be a snob, whom he equated to a vulgarian

The point I want to make is that whenever he received anything from anybody he regarded himself as a debtor to his benefactor even when the latter had no inkling about it at all And as soon as he thrilled to an artist, he would go miles out of his way to do him a service or give an encouragement by word of mouth Our great novelist Saratchandra Chatterji is an instance in point But what was perhaps the most convincing evidence was his reaction to Kaji Nazrul Islam Let me explain why I say this

I have mentioned already that Subhash was never one to break bread with Bohemians or eccentries who openly defied the accepted social codes with a superior smile Kaji Nazrul, in his turn, called martinets prigs, with an insouciant guffaw Carefree Subhash had heard of his talents as a poet and composer but kept him at arm's length So even when I enthused over Kaji, he stayed cold as marble However, once it so happened that the two met at a charity performance I was giving in the Rammohan Library in aid of the political detenus Deshbandhu C R Das himself presided Kaji began with his famous hortatory song

Durgama giri kantara maru dustara parabara,
Langhite habe ratri nishithe jatrira hunshiar !

Subhash was swept off his feet, especially when the

poet sang the last stanza opening with *Phansii manche geye gechhe jara jibaner jay gan*

I give below my own translation of the three best verses

Grim mountains, pathless forests, deserts,
spanless oceans vast,
We'll brave in the heart of Night, up, voyagers,
the die is cast!
The boat is rocked, the waters swirl, the pilot
has missed the way,
The sails are torn, who will to the helm, with
courage in high display?
Where are our stalwarts? Come to the fore!
Calls Destiny at your door!
The storm is black, yet dare we must and
lead our ship to the shore
The ones who on the hangman's scaffold sang
lone hymns to life's sunrise,
Are watching now with spirit eyes, what will
you sacrifice?
Who will take up the gauntlet flung by Fate
and save the nation?
The boat is rocked, the waters swirl! Up, pilot
to your station!

The next day, lo, Subhash called on me early in the morning! The talk we had was, in substance, something like this

"Look here, Dilip! I have come—you know for whom Kazi What are you doing about him?"

"Let me tell you a story, my dear Subhash," I said agreeably surprised "There was a High Court Judge who once, against the jury, gave a queer judgment con-

temps?) does leave, alas, a legacy of cynicism in the mind of an idealist activist So, inevitably, Subhash's outlook on life and things had to be modified as a result of such unhappy experiences That is why in his 'thirties he used to quote, somewhat bitterly, what C R Das had said after a year's leadership in politics that he had not run across half as many scoundrels in his twenty-five years' experience in law-courts as he had in that one year of co-operation with the non-co-operators of India

I would not have dwelt on this had it not been for the fact that Subhash felt his deepening loneliness in his later life as keenly as he did He told me more than once that it was brought home to him that he had few to count on among his fellow-workers The novelist Saratchandra used to tell us (with an artist's characteristic sigh) that ingratitude is so harmful to our social well-being less because it injures the benefited than because it infects the benefactor's judgment with the virus of cynicism In his remarkable novel entitled *Palli-samaj* he has brought out this thesis with his graphic art Thus he was wont to warn Subhash repeatedly against trusting people too readily But the crux of the problem in such matters of emotional psychology lies not so much in one's failure to see how one's faith in human nature is being sapped at its source, as in one's powerlessness to make good the damage "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" holds more in the world of commercial give and take than in the world of psychological reactions

If this is borne in mind it may be easier to understand why Subhash was sometimes harsh in his strictures on his colleagues, specially during the period of his deepening frustration in politics I would have passed it by had I not seen how the psychological kink pre-



Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose
In Malaya, 1943



K P Chatterji
Dilipkumar Roy

Subhash Chandra Bose
C C Desai

In England, 1920



Jawaharlal Nehru In 1928 Subhash Chandra Bose



Subhash Chandra Bose
In Vienna 1935



Dr Dharamvir — Subhash Chandra Bose In Dalhousie, 1937 — Mrs Dharamvir



Subhash Chandra Bose in his home

vented him from doing full justice to Pandit Jawaharlal, with the result that he could not in the end help feeling somewhat hard on him, too Otherwise I am confident he would have simply laughed it away, as he should have, when some of his associates warned him against Jawaharlal s unconfessed 'anti-Bengali' mentality I could not but regard it as great tragedy For I never believed that Jawaharlal could be adjudged parochial by anybody who could put two and two together I don t claim he had no limitations (mustn't the human ego always mean a setting up of frontiers—at least till it is completely abolished ?) but I do say that none who even once saw Jawaharlal at close range could possibly fail to be impressed by his fundamental sincerity and integrity of character In our derelict times he was perhaps the one man in politics who with his clear grasp of the trend of bizarre forces especially in the sphere of international politics gave us some sense of direction and, even in the thick of the misleading poison-clouds of diplomacy, steered clear of the reefs of militant nationalism and the shoals of suicidal communalism

I wrote all this to Subhash in 1939 in a demi-confidential letter (which I sent through a courier) when he insisted, against the wise advice of Panditji, on standing for re-election as President of the Congress I risked it because I feared that his wiser elder s counsel would go unheeded, as unhappily, it did subsequently I say 'unhappily because some henchmen of Subhash constantly dinned into his ears that he was 'the man of destiny at this crucial hour of Indian history In my letter I protested—very humbly but firmly—that we should be able to serve our country best if we really realised that "though all of us are wanted, none of us is wanted

much."* Not that I was so naive as to think that he would be likely to listen to such philosophical nonsense advocated from an arm-chair aloofness, for I could well imagine how hard it must be for him to rise to the occasion and resign gracefully when his blood had already drunk fire, thanks to his unfortunate clashes with the Congress High Command But I had to make some attempt to make him see that he should stand eventually to gain if he would just resign gracefully and make room for the next President "I know from experience, dear Subhash," so I wrote, "how difficult it is to stand back even for a moment when fanfares of intoxication goad one forward relentlesssly But when all is said and done, a man becomes great in action only after having been great in his decisions which prompted the action This may be beyond the capacity of the rank and file, but surely not beyond yours Besides, you simply can't afford to be blind to the probability that even if you were substantially right in your assessment of the political situaton, this unseemly eagerness to be re-elected would look too personal to be convincing Furthermore, Pandit Jawaharlal was surely right when he wrote to you that you hardly needed to cling to the President's chair in order to make your great influence felt in the country" But we humans, alas, being human

On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale †

And we collide, as the gales do—and then there are unexpected eddies which often such us down, the more effectively because of the haze the gales bring in their

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* A favourite saying of Lowes Dickinson—E M Forster's biography of Dickinson

† *Essay on Man,* by Alexander Pope

wake No wonder Subhash's vision was blurred in the blinding dust-storm of party politics

But what about Pandit Jawaharlal? I have often marvelled how he could manage to avoid these storms and eddies with success! And I' spent so much thought on him not for the fun of speculation I have endeavoured to appraise him as best I could because I did wish with all my heart that he and Subhash might be real comrades-in-arms in the same camp to confront our common enemy the English bureaucracy I propose to dwell for a little on my gradual discovery of the reason why, by an irony of fate, this was rendered imposible, if only to bring Subhash's character into a bolder relief through the art of contrast

It doesen't need much perspicacity to see that these two bold and eminent sons of India had a deal in common They were both aristocratic to their finger-tips, generous, attractive, magnetic, patriotic, ingenuous, unquestionably handsome, astonishingly healthy, incredibly energetic, naturally affectionate, essentially sincere and last, though not least, utterly inaccessible to fear that makes us falter What then could have been the cause that dug an unbridgeable gulf between them?

Realising full well that it is just when one itches most to figure as a Daniel that one is most liable to make a *faux pas,* I will nevertheless hazard that the crux of the trouble in such matters is generally to be found in some kind of indefinable instinctive disaccord So it happened that Subhash's undeclared misgivings about Panditji where not appreciably lessened by the latter's "fast-growing enthusiasm for the oracle of Moscow" Besides, the mystic in him, too, could hardly feel assuaged when Panditji, improvising on the Communist war-cry

about religion being the opium of the soul, openly wrote in his autobiography that the "spectacle of what is called religion" always filled him with "horror" and so he had "frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it" He did, indeed, expose unerringly (in Chapter 47) a good many of the defect of "organised religion" Only, alas, his findings were valid about what Prof Toynbee rightly calls the outer "non-essentials of religion" as against its essence *

But as it is beyond the purview of my 'reminiscences to hold the brief for religion in its essence or belaud its great contributions which inspired Prof Toynbee to hail religion in his *Civilization on Trial* as "the serious business of the human race," I will confine myself to stress only Subhash's religious-mystic soul as one of the root causes of his disaccord with the agnostic materialism of Panditji There was another thing Panditji has said in his fascinating autobiography that he not only felt that he was "a stranger and alien in the West" but in India, too, he sometimes had "an exile's feeling"

Though I felt moved when I read this, Subhash just could not sympathise with him He was wont to say that Panditji felt like an alien in India because his subconscious had heen strewn early with the seeds of Rational Materialism of Europe and Godless Communism of Russia And he added feelingly that though he could love all countries and admire the good things of all cultures, he could feel at home only in India "And so," he said challengingly, "while Jawaharlal can take his orders from abroad, I can not dream of adopting any philosophy of life imported from the West, still less accept that the sick and maimed in India should be made

* *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, Chapter 19

whole by high-soundiug nostrums of the Russian dictators "

Such a difference in total outlook could be attributed only to a fundamental incompatibility whose roots can never be discovered in what we commonly call our surface personality or visible temperament That is why I have set it down to what, in default of a better name, I have labelled " instinctive disaccord " In this context, however, I have used the word instinct in the sense which is connoted by our incomparably more pregnant word *samskara* which, with all its mystic wealth of implications and suggestiveness, is untranslatable in any European language A conversation I had with Subhash in 1939 may, perhaps, better elucidate the mystery

NINETEEN

It was in Calcutta We were reclining after our midday meal, nestling in a profusion of pillows and bolsters We talked of one thing and another till I said with an air of casualness that Jawaharlal was a fascinating personality

Subhash appraised me

" You remember how deliciously Sarat Babu used to say, 'I am not quite the fool I look' ?"

What on earth are you insinuating?" I packed all the innocence I could summon into my voice

He met me with his heart-warming laughter "We don't consult a dictionary when we already know the meaning of a word like fascinating "

"But when I said Jawaharlal was fascinating," I replied, "it was merely a leading note to a word beyond all dictionaries Only you never gave me the chance to

say that if he is fascinating you are irresistible!"

I only got a fisticuff for my pains

"O horror! And you say that I lie like a born bungler when you do it like a veritable bigamist? But no, spare yourself another prevarication, for," and his face instantly changed, "I'll play into your hands with eyes open"

"Which means?"

"Tell you plump my opinion of Jawaharlal"

My heart beat nineteen to the dozen Oh, do! I am agog!'

But there again he had suddenly relapsed into a brown study as was his wont whenever he had something significant to say There was that old far-away look in his eyes too, once more I felt a malaise gnawing within me, or, shall I say, a nameless fear Was he going to blurt out something unacceptable to me? Wouldn't it be rather embarrassing if he went too far? For I could not but own to myself that I had found Jawaharlal more than "fascinating" And then, din't I owe him a deep debt for having rescued me in a most awkward situation? I saw again in my mind's eye another episode

TWENTY

It happened, in 1922 (or was it in 1923), at Subhash's house under the aegis of his guru C R Das I had been invited to sing before a galaxy of political leaders who deigned for once to be entertained Here was God's plenty There was the leonine Das, strong and massive, radiating strength and kindliness There was Jawaharlal with his Hamlet smile There was Sarat Chandra Bose a pillar of moral support to wherever morality rocked on its foundations There were a few turbaned Olym-

pians who condescended to smile at me deeply conscious that it was so good of them to find music "interesting" *Noblesse oblige* was their motto! There was Surendramohan Ghosh with the inscrutable Mona Lisa smile flickering on his lips, unafraid and ready to be interned once again where there is neither laughter nor marriage the jail There was a doughty Pathan, a born fire-eater and smileless critic of the frivolous who swore by Croce's ringing battle-cry "It is just opposition that rejuvenates" And there in one corner chuckled the shy T C Goswami, a rich aristocrat with a velvet heart and Oxford accent who was going soon to prove an all-too-willing victim for every opportunist vulture round the corner There were also the lesser fry, giants with puggrees or topees, dwarfs with bald heads or top-knots, and non-co-operators nodding assent in Gandhi caps and co-operators tossing defiance in Turkish fez It was, indeed, an awe-inspiring and, withal, an impossible motley company that assembled to save an ancient country with a modern motto "We shall all hang together or, assuredly, we shall all hang separately"

I was thrilled! Was I, a thing of earth, going to sing to such a starry consistory?

"Silence please!" roared the stentorian Das "Dilip is going to give us a famous martial song composed by his father Dwijendralal Roy *dhao dhao samarakshetre*"

I give below a literal translation of the song in the same metre and rhyme-scheme

Onward, onward, all to the front with vibrant
songs of victory!
Mother India calls to strafe the myrmidons
of tyranny

Who would hesitate his life to give for his
mother, sister and wife?
Brothers, to arms! Repel the foe the drums
boom, hark, and bugles blow!
Answer we must Her ringing call hail,
Mother mine! our All-in-all!
Who would laze or loll when vandals desecrate
our hearth and home?
Who dare dally in his Motherland's hour of
peril? Comrades, come!
Shall our swords stay sheathed? Awake!
Assault! Her honour is at stake!
Brothers, to arms! Repel the foe the drums
boom, hark, and bugles blow!
Answer we must Her ringing call hail,
Mother mine! our All-in-all!
None shall now yield ground or falter, none
the enemy's prisoner be
Adverse Fate we will not fear, nor parley
with iniquity
Shall brute power subdue our soul? Nay,
we're vowed to attain or fall
Brothers, to arms! Repeal the foe the drums
boom, hark, and bugles blow!
Answer we must Her ringing call hail,
Mother mine! our All-in-all!
Onward, onward, all to the front
to annihilate the phalanxed hordes!
How can India, the hallowed haunt of Light,
brook Night's dictator lords?
Expiate they shall, by God
our blood, they've shed, with their own blood

Brothers, to arms! Repel the foe the drums
boom, hark, and bugles blow!
Answer we must Her ringing call
hail, Mother mine! our All-in-all!

I had a habit, when Subhash was present, to shoot, while singing, eager, furtive glances at his face I knew this was a wrong impulse, but I could never resist the temptation to assess the effect my music was having on him

I have hinted already how deeply Subhash used to be moved by music but it is impossible to depict how I was effected myself every time I felt that my music had stirred him So I might have only said that I was on dizzy heights of rapture, and left it at that, had not my world of bliss, alas, burst like an irised bubble For it so happened that just when I was soaring in the Empyrean I found my wings suddenly clipped I was met by a hum of voices—the great fire-brands were talking—and animatedly! Stung to the core, I stopped dead, leaving the last verse unsung

"I am sorry, Dilip," apologised Subhash in a low voice, drawing close to me I shot a glance at him His face was tender with pain "I exposed you to this," he wailed "I ought to have known better"

Suddenly we were all startled a clear, incisive voice rang out

"Gentlemen,'" thundered Panditji, "if you don't care for music, have some consideration at least for those who do care"

There was a startled hush the situation was saved and I had to sing again

Since that day I have loved Panditji with a sense of gratefulness that time could never completely erase And, so far as I myself was concerned, it was surely a case of love at first sight Of course I knew full well that he could never really care for a man like me who disliked the pretensions of science and apotheosised religion which he so often condemned as medieval, but this had never made any diffrence to my admiration for him And yet I wonder if I would have felt so attracted to him, however noble his character, had it not been for my startled awareness on that fateful night of humiliation when he had gone out of his way to come to my rescue notwithstanding his lack of interest in me Time has only deepend my regard and solicitude for him in a steady crescendo till it culminated in 1936 in a profound sympathy for his loneliness and honesty His Autobiography had stirred me as few books have in my life Realising, however, that he had no experience of real peace I had asked Sri Aurobindo whether he would support my praying for him He had replied "Pray for him of course He is a man with a strong psychic element and in this life or another that must go beyond the mind to find its source"

TWENTY-ONE

So I started praying for him It so happened that just about this time one Princess V, derelict with a bereavement wrote to me I put her in touch with Gurudev and started praying for her as well even though my sceptical mind had yet to be fully convinced of the efficacy of prayer What happened next had better be

presented through the correspondence that follows I wrote on 7-10-1936 ·

> Guru, on the evening when I prayed rather warmly for Jawaharlal and Princess V, why did the latter have this vivid experience at that *identical* hour? For, she writes from Bangalore, she actually visualised me in meditation after which her eagerness to visit Pondicherry made her quite restless again And she got peace, she assures me—so much so that she thanks me for having helped her through my prayer But Jawaharlal, I am fairly certain, never felt it My question why on earth do some prayers act in this vivid way on some, where other stay put where they are?

Wrote Sri Aurobindo

> Dilip, as for Princess V's experience it is quite natural since you see from her own statement that she has always had a natural tendency to go beyond the physical into supra-physical experience That is what she means by 'having imaginations' When one is living in the physical mind, the only way to escape from it is imagination (incidentally, that is why poetry and art etc have so strong a hold), but these imaginations are really shadows of supra-physical experience and once the barrier of the physical mind is broken or even swung a little open, there come the experiences themselves if the temperament is favourable Hence visions etcetera—all that are miscalled psychic phenomena
>
> As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down Some prayers, are answered, all are not An example The eldest daughter of my maternal uncle,

Krishna Kumar Mitra (editor of the daily paper *Sanjivani*, not by any means a romantic occult, supra-physical or even imaginative person), was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped, as useless The father said 'There is only God now, let us pray' He did and from that moment the girl began to recover—typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also I know of any number of cases like that Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery put a prayer in the slot and get our asking Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, wouldn't God be in a rather awkward hole if He had to grant all of them?

Oscar Wilde was hardly right when he said that the best way of resisting a temptation is to yield to it The truth lies the other way about the insatiable fire of temptation grows by what it feeds on So I feel now an irresistible impulse to complete the picture by quoting a little more from the correspondence that had passed between me and Sri Aurobindo—in September, 1936, to be precise

TWENTY-TWO

I wrote

Guru, I have of late been engrossed in Jawaharlal's Autobiography It is, indeed, a moving book And one of the things that have impressed me most is his power of loyalty It has made me re-view him in a new light, or, shall I say, from a new angle of

vision For I remember how often in the past we used to criticise him—Subhash and I—because his personal devotion to Mahatma Gandhi should have so effectively cured him of his devotion to his own ideals Subhash used to argue—and I half agreed—that one's duty to a personality should never take precedence over one's duty to the Impersonal whatever that may mean But, as days go by, I catch myself wondering whether the impersonal aspect of the Divine must necessarily stand for deeper values? In the *Bhagavat* the Godheads are described as envious of humans because these were blessed play-mates on earth with Krishna, the *Purushottama* Wasn't that why Vivekananda upraided Nivedita 'You do not yet understand India We, Indians, are Man-worshippers after all Our God is Man You may always say that the Image is God The error you have to avoid is to think God is the Image'* The reprimand overawed me At all events, Jawaharlal's confessions made me feel that *his* way of reaching for Truth has a curious kinship with ours, being a sort of *Guruvad* in politics, why not?—Wouldn't he be aghast though were he to overhear this?

Sri Aurobindo wrote back

That is all right As for the question of personality there is always the personal and the impersonal side of the Divine and the Truth and it is a mistake to think that the impersonal alone is true or important, for that leads to a void, incompleteness in part of the being while only one side is given satisfaction Impersonality belongs to the intellec-

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* Quoted from Nivedita's *My Master as I saw Him*

tual mind and the static self, personality to the soul and heart and dynamic being Those who disregard the Personal Divine ignore something which is profound and essential

I wrote again

Guru, I have just finished reading Jawaharlal's Autobiography The result I can't meditate—in fact I haven't been able to meditate much during a whole week the book has gripped me But he is so English in his outlook, isn't he? Not only in his habits of living (we are, all of us, more or less westernised for that matter), but, what is more important, in his way of thinking and feeling after Truth if you know what I mean? In case you don't, here is a citation from the last chapter, titled Epilogue

> Indeed, I often wonder if I represent anyone at all, and I am inclined to think that I do not, though many have kindly and friendly feelings towards me I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me, as she does to all her children in innumerable ways, and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred, or whatever the number may be, generations of Brahmans I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions They are both part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they also create in

me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself I am a stranger and alien in the West I cannot be of it But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling

Isn't it beautiful and moving? None the less, I wish he could have delved a little deeper if only to discover what *is* this India that 'clings to her children in innumerable ways' the India of millennial wisdom, the India rich with the fadeless Lotus of the Spirit, the India—and only India—which has fashioned in her mystic womb 'children of Immortality —*amritasya putrah*—and continued to live on through long dynasties of true Kings among men Forgive me, Guru, for thrusting my sorrow on you but I have loved this beautiful soul too genuinely—at long range though it be—to resist this urge risen in me to ask you to help him, as you once helped Subhash, with your blessing And it is peace I would like you to give him first For, on his own showing, he has had no taste of peace , I do not have in mind here the highest Peace, the *Yogic* Peace of God and Bliss and Love which you wrote about in 1932* when I

* "I will begin not with Doubt," Sri Aurobindo wrote to me (25-7-1932), "but with the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the senses Now, certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not only as concrete as but more concrete than anything sensed by the ear or eye or touch in the world of matter , but it is certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience When the peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flows out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure when everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine,

doubted whether they could be as concrete as sensory perceptions No, for of course the great Peace that fulfils cannot be *given* one has to win it, to grow into it just as the chick within its shell has to grow till it breaks out into life outside the shell But surely Jawaharlal may hope for some presage of its bounty because he merits it far more than many another who got it through your touch Somewhere he writes how before an image of the Buddha he had a deep nostaglia for the peace* which could transfigure a human face so marvellously That Subhash has had hints of this peace, I know, though it was only in jail that he could hold on to it as soon as he came out he lost it again But let me finish first what I have begun

Referring to Gandhiji's withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement in 1935 for what seemed to him 'metaphysical and mystical reasons in which he 'was not interested' Jawaharlal writes in his chapter titled *Desolation*

> 'With a stab of pain I felt that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him fcr many years had snapped I realised that I held clear and definite views about many matters, which were oppsed to his And yet in the past I had tried to subordinate them, as far as I could, to

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then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven—for of these physical things you cannot be sure that they are what your senses re, present them to be, but in the concrete experience of the Divine-doubt is impossible '

* Years later he wrote to me in a lovely letter "When, if ever, I shall achieve any real peace I do not know My way is to seek it through action Sometimes, though rarely, one has glimpses of it" (dated 3-12-1945, Allahabad)

What I conceived to be the larger loyalty—the cause of national freedom for which the Congress seemed to be working I tried to be loyal and faithful to my leader and my colleagues, for in my spiritual make-up loyalty to a cause and to one's colleagues holds a high place I fought many a battle within myself when I felt that I was being dragged away from the anchor of my spiritual faith Somehow I managed to compromise Perhaps I did wrong, for it can never be right for any one to let go of that anchor But in the conflict of ideals I clung to my loyalty to my colleagues, and hoped that the rush of events and the development of our struggle might dissolve the difficulties that troubled me and bring my colleagues nearer to my view-point

'And now? Suddenly I felt very lonely in that cell of Alipore Gaol Life seemed to be a dreary affair, a very wilderness of desolation Of the many hard lessons I had learnt, the hardest and the most painful now faced me that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on any one One must journey through life alone, to rely on others is to invite heart-break'

I was so affected, Guru, that I felt like asking him to come and stay with me for a few weeks in my peaceful flat here overlooking the sea But if he even Subhash didn't comply it is unlikely that Jawaharlal would Besides as *Vyas* says in the *Mahabharata Kalena sarvam vihitam vidhatra*—the Divine withholds everything till the hour is ripe And the right hour may strike sooner through disillusionments! To quote from one of your own letters 'Am-

bition and need to act in the vital, in the mind, a mental idealism—these two things are the great fosterers of illusion, The spiritual path needs a certain amount of realism one has to see the real value of the things that are, which is very little except as steps in evolution' so I had better leave Jawaharlal to his mind's approved way of proceeding "to meet his destiny by the roads one takes to avoid it,"* and pay more heed to ours approved by faith and fostered by worship

But I long to have your opinion on his reading of religion Please read first his chapter entitled, *What is Religion*, and then *Desolation,* where his 'accumulated irritation turned to challenge religion and the religious outlook' And note how he sums up

> 'What an enemy this (religion) was to clearness of thought and fixity of purpose, I thought for was it not based on emotion and passion? Presuming to be spiritual, how far removed it was from real spirituality and things of the spirit! Thinking in terms of some other world, it had little conception of human values and social justice. With its preconceived notions it deleberately shuts its eyes to reality for fear that this might not fit in with them It condemned the violence of the sword, but what of the violence that comes quietly and often in peaceful garb and

* Pandit Jawaharlal writes at the end of his chapter entitled "Struggle" "Only life itself with its bitter lessons force us along new paths and ultimately, which is far harder, makes us think differently Perhaps we may help a little in this process And perhaps

On recontre sa destinee
Souvent par les chemins qu'on prend pour l'eviter

starves and kills, or worse still, without doing any outward physical injury, outrages the spirit and breaks the heart O Lord of thunder and confusion, since when did you abdicate your kingdom of cloudland in favour of the mental whirlpools of irritated humanity?"

Apropos, Guru, please suffer me to tell you about a curious vision I saw just as I was marvelling at the wealth of invectives turned to account by our noble Judge to convict poor Dame Religion, more sinned against than sinning

TWENTY-THREE

(A FANTASIA)

The Court-room is seething with humanity, a motley crowd, over-eager to attend the trial of Miss Art who sits somewhat demurely in the dock Mr Morality, the Public Prosecutor, glowers at her with offended dignity On the dais is seated the Chief Justice, flanked by Jurymen, all staring, intrigued, at the accused in sepulchral silence

MR MORALITY (*ruthlessly*) Your Lordship! This shameless and dangerous slut must be forthwith put out of harm's way

CHIEF JUSTICE (*sternly*) No un-Parliamentary language, if you please! Remember, till she is proved guilty she must be looked upon as pure white like driven snow Now what are the charges against her?

MR MORALITY (*joyously*) They are legion, your Lordship!

CHIEF JUSTICE (*severely*) To the point, if you please!

MR MORALITY (*bowing*) I stand rebuked, your Lordship I'll drive straight to the target Well, she is——er——(*counting on his fingers*) an enemy, by nature and temperament, to ordered living That's charge number one Number (*with a lift in his voice*) two she unsettles all fixity of purpose, despising as she does middle class tidiness and respectability She pooh-poohs the disciplining of the senses, that's number——er——(*bends down to his junior*) four, your Lardship Then number five (*impressively*) her mind being naturally at home only in the world of nebula and make-believe which she dubs "Beauty" with a capital B, and Elusive with a big E again—er (*pauses and frowns*) I was going to say this fantastic thing Beauty has made her throw to the four winds all sense of proportion and decency—only—the trouble or rather the danger is that whosoever once breaks bread with her, your Lordship, starts raving as senselessly (*His voice quavers*) That's why I say, she is more than wicked she's a sinister corrupter of morality and she knows it She also reverses the values—for she would paint a debauchee into an angel without the least shame or compunction and, naturally, a devil deified becomes even more interesting than a Divine scoffed at

CHIEF JUSTICE (*covering the ears*) O blasephemy —stop it (*Murmur among the Jury, because the Public is manifestly tickled*)

MR MORALITY (*undaunted*) That's just what I and I alone am here for, your Lordship to stop it once and for all! (*He enjoys his own joke and chuckles but turns sombre as the Judge gives him a stare*) And remember, your Lordship, that this is by no means the most hair-raising of her iniquities (*Carried away*) For with her damnable (*the Judge frowns*)—I mean—er—with her

topsyturvy conception of right and wrong, she claims she has no earthly use for morality in her precious art—Art with a big A again, your Lordship—there's only good art and bad art and sensitiveness to Beauty, she avers Consequently she pretends—er—I mean she is so degenerate that she can't even see that it isn't good art or sensitiveness to beauty that keeps society going, but (*warming up*) give me right conduct, ordered living, moral sense (*Lively murmur of satisfaction among the Jury, the Public looks glum*) So (*clearing his throat, emphatically*), my charge is—is it number eight or nine?—it makes no matter—what I mean is (*thumping the table in front*) that, lost to all sense of shame, the wretched wanton tirelessly holds up to ridicule codes of univesal decency because these are man-made, she says, and therefore she can have no truck with these And why? (*He shakes his fist at her*) Because she stands for Inspiration and not convention, that's *her* jargon, my Lord, confound her impudence! (*Turning to the Jury among whom a few smile inadvertently*) But gentlemen of the Jury! It's no laughing matter I can assure you! For the deplorable fact is that she *has* a following of sorts and somehow always succeeds in encouraging the youth to laugh at what should have brought tears to their eyes (*The Jury look at one another uneasily*) But she hasn't had the last laugh yet, your Lordship—not by a long shot! Because she is (*he smiles*) even more ridiculous herself than morality—I mean—since morality is at least consistent, but she is damned inconsistent (*A titter is heard among the women, the Chief Justice smiling perfunctorily*) Here's an instance She lampoons our good old citizen, Mr Public Censor, whose hoary beard has all but covered his eyes, she says (*The Public Censor coughs in embarrass-*

ment as the titter grows more audible and the Policemen feel restive) That is why, she argues, he has grown blind as a hirsute puppy (*The Chief Justice tries in vain not to smile*) But, to be serious once more, my, Lord, what I mean is, she condemns this venerable keeper of our conscience as an upholder of violence and she calls him barbarous (*the Censor fidgets*) since he bans by brute force what she is pleased to call things of beauty (*He pauses for breath*) But what of the terrible force she exercises—a force almost hypnotic I should say, since it works subterraneously through unholy suggestions! What, for instance, of the fascinating power of a beautiful nude or of a lovely *fille de joie* who talks lightly of chastity? How long can the high pillars of our white respectability be kept perpendicular if such dark subversive forces are unleashed or even permitted on the specious plea that art and beauty has nothing to do with morality? (*His voice quavers*) Gentlemen of the Jury! I adjure you to remember that Christ enjoined not to judge by appearances So let us not be swayed by pity or moved by—er—(*embarrassed*) by the feminine allure of this virgin of easy virtue Beware! For take it from me—she is quick in the uptake and can employ her siren charm like—er—a siren, if you know what I mean She knows how to sigh beautifully like *un etre mal compris* and can at will impose upon you all by—er—appearing flower-like and pure and guileless like—er—like Madame Eve before she had eaten the proverbial apple But remember social security is a serious thing, morality is a serious thing, and last, though not least—(*sententiously*) respectability is a serious thing—in fact, *the* most serious thing, I should say, because if its apple-cart were upset, the structure of our age-long civilisation would be shaken

to its very foundations and we must revert to a barbarism worse than cannibalism (*He thumbs the table as his peroration comes to an end great commotion in the Court room*)

POLICEMEN Silence! (*The hum dies down*)

CHIEF JUSTICEE Hm (*Turning to Miss Art*) Well, Miss! (*With impeccable courtesy*) Where is your Counsel?

MISS ART I can't afford one, your Lordship

CHIEF JUSTICE (*Some what embaarrassed*) I see —nay, I—I am damned if I do (*With decision*) But that is neither here nor there The point is—well, er—have you got anything to say, in self-defence? (*Pause*) Why are you silent? (*Pause again*) You can defend yourself, you know—that is, if you care to (*Impatiently*) Am I to take it then that you plead guilty?

MISS ART (You may, my Lord? Only—(*she sighs beautifully and lowers her head*)

CHIEF JUSTICE (*patronisingly*) Come, com Woman! We are here to administer justice—but fairly on the evidence For (*grandiloquently*) this high Tribunal of Common Sense is as faultlessly perfect and perfectly flawless as the White man's sense of fairplay when he is out to civilise the coloured races

MISS ART (*taking heart*) I will say this, my Lord, that Mr Morality has, indeed, judged me to perfection; Only—*appraising the Pontiff with a fixed stare*) only, my Lord, he knows me as little as husband knows a loveless wife by whom he has had a dozen children and yet remains fundamentally a stranger to her, because she has only opened her virgin body to him, but not her soul But suppose, your Lordship, the unhappy woman were hauled up here like me today what evidence could she

adduce to prove to the Court that her husband of morality has had no admission into what is the quintessence of her being? But he would *be* able to prove to the hilt, mind you, that he knew her intimately because he would be able to describe to the minutest detail even the hidden parts of her body which you and the Jury might verify to your complete satisfaction

(*Chorus of scandalised protests from the Judge and Jury,* (*titter of laughter among the Public*)

MR MORALITY (*sarcastically*) Wasn't I right your Lordship?

CHIEF JUSTICE (*indignantly*) But this is shocking, to say the least! (*Turning to the accused*) Look here, woman! Your language and taste—er—well, the less said about them the better (*To the Jury*) You have all heard what she said Now, tell me your verdict

THE JURY (*with one voice*) Guilty, your Lordship

CHIEF JUSTICE (*nodding, gravely*) I endorse your unanimous verdict (*Turning again to the accused*) I comdemn you unhesitatingly as a born corrupter of public morality and weal and sentence you to be hanged by the neck till you are dead

The vision ended at his moment just when Miss Art was metamorphosed into Miss Religion, Mr Morality into Mr Rationalist and the Jury into Messrs Politicians and Scientists I do not know what happened afterwards I believe she was duly hanged what I doubt is whether the rope held till life was extinct

* * *

Wrote Sri Aurobindo in reply

Dilip, I do not take the same view of religion as Jawaharlal Religion is always imperfect because it

is a mixture of man's spirituality with his endeavours that come in trying to sublimate ignorantly his lower nature Hindu religion appears to me as a cathedral-temple half in ruins, noble in the mass, often fantastic in detail but always fantastic with a significance —crumbled and badly outworn in places, but a cathedral-temple in which service is still done to the Unseen and Its real presence can be felt by those who enter with the right spirit The outer social structure which is built for its approach is another matter

TWENTY-FOUR

Such was the man about whom I approached Subhash for an opinion I felt diffident, I repeat for somehow or other I could not help some misgivings in discussing one whom I happened profoundly to admire—the more so as I was somewhat afraid lest my interlocutor should damp my ardour with his casual ways But as I persuaded myself that it was no use meeting evil half way, I tried to quell with my robust optimism the lowering clouds of misgivings

"Jawaharlal!" Subhash muttered "It's deuced difficult, you know I hardly know how to put it—my total reaction to him and all that he stands for!"

My heart beat fast

"Difficult," he reiterated, 'because his good fortune, though enviable in a sense, is not yet fully comprehensible to me"

(I am *not* putting, into his mouth what he didn't mean or imply Doubtless, I put it all in my own language, but what he said made such a deep dent on my

mind that I cannot possibly distort it, the less so as I admired Panditji as sincerely as I loved Subhash)

"Good fortune, did you say?" I asked after a pause

"Let me explain," he said, picking his words now with deliberation "But don't you butt in with your comments till I invite them No offence, Dilip! Only you see, it's difficult to say something and be quite sure it hasn't conveyed just the opposite of one's interior feeling about it"

"But what is all this, my dear Subhash?" I exclaimed "Give me your hand Why, for *you* to traffick in psychological niceties!"

Subhash gave me his old endearing laugh as he gave my hand his answering pressure

"The moralist can't influence the artist without bein himself a little influenced on the rebound," he said breezily "The eater himself is eaten, you know, as our *Vedas* say" Then, in a more sober key "Yes The hard school of life has taught me one thing at any rate that the right idiom is even more rewarding than it sounds But listen now, and with total attention, if you please!"

"Of course it goes without saying," he went on, as his face suddenly became grave (his expression needed no gradual transition, like ours, his cheery tone no cadence to pass on from one phase to the next), "that a man who has attained the eminence Jawaharlal has cannot have been made of the common stuff, let there be no mistake about that None can possibly doubt that he has a rare intellect, perspicacity, penmanship et cetera—I need hardly carry coals to Newcastle making a list of his manifold gifts to you, a born hero-worshipper"

"Now, now, Subhash," I cut in, "it is hardly fair to give a dog a bad name when one has already decided to

hang it If I admired Das as *you* do, you wouldn't dub it hero-worship, just because the adoring dog then would be welcome to you But if I admired Jawaharlal a little warmly—"

"But there you are,' he laughed "For when you mention him and Das in the same breath you give your case away—"

'But, but, but, Subhash, that's even worse than unfair I never said that in greatness Jawaharlal had the same stature as Das or Gandhiji, not to mention Tilak or Sri Aurobindo "

He laughed outright

"Thank, thank, thank you Dilip For you have taken a load off my chest Now I'll be able to be as frank with you as I want to be "

I laughed at his mimicry "I didn't know you could thank like this "

"But I had to thank you thrice as I was thrice-happy, don't you know," said Subhash bursting out laughing again "For, do what I would, I simply couldn't lump it were you to add another so soon to your bulging bag of heroes But a final farewell to levity For Jawaharlal *is* a serious proposition, as you too must admit "

"I do," I agreed, "and perhaps even more disquieting than serious, seeing that he condemns religion straightaway without having even troubled to investigate how its inner heart beats "

"But there I don't agree with you," Suhhash said with a touch of asperity "For when a man hasn't felt the heart-beats of a movement his criticisms are bound to be too superficial to be disquieting To expect Jawaharlal or a materialist to say something profound about religion is like expecting a moderate to say something

inspiring about the spirit of youth which urges one to stake all one has for complete independence No, I am *not* hard on him," he anticipated me "For he does give one the impression of an outsider—or shall I say an official observer—when he airs his views on the disservice religion has done to mankind And that is why he has never said anything profound about it His strictures and diatribes are not inspired by any kernel experience of religion, they are based only on the observation of its social effects which are peripheral"

"You are, indeed, coruscating, Subhash!" I said "For though religious experience has influenced society—because any experience of a man living in society is bound to influence it for good or for evil—yet religion in its *essence* is not a social phenomenon Pandit Jawaharlal doesn't understand this simple fact because as you say, he hasn't yet got to the kernel of religion But that is precisely why I dubbed his inveighings against religion 'disquieting,' because few people realise that a man's winning to eminence in one sphere doesn't necessarily make him into an authority on all subjects under the sun, as Tyndal put it so lucidly in his famous Belfast address"

"But why disquieting, Dilip?" He shook his head 'You, as a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, must realise that *his* evidence and verdict in favour of religion can well afford to smile at the superficial criticisms of a regiment of outsiders and ignorants No! Jawaharlal may make an impression, I admit, but not in a domain for which he hasn't been able to secure a passport yet"

"For what domain then do you think he has secured one?"

"Why, in politics, social organisation, in his ideas of

loyalty, his outlook on ethics, pragmatism—and what not And when he airs his views about such topics he is always worth listening to, whether you agree with him or no. Besides, he *is* a charming man, as you say, even though a man can't become a leader of the people on the strength of his personal charm alone—no, don't, for I haven't finished yet I am far from insinuating that he has no other equipment But, as I told you just now, I have often felt that he has attained to his unique position because, somehow, he has managed to get into the good graces of Madame Luck" (Subhash used the word *Bhagya Devi,* which, like many another Sanskrit word, is untranslatable Luck is too light a word, almost banal in its connotation while *Bhagya* has a rich association of dignity which accrues to eminence preordained by a Divine Decision of some sort)

"Luck?" I queried

"What other term can possibly explain his inexplicable popularity everywhere? He is with everyone I would be tempted to say that he was a *barer gharer mashi kaner gharer pishi**—if he hadn't been what he is an honest man And yet you can't get away from the fact —a rather strange phenomenon in this unstable world of ours—that he is looked upon by almost everybody in India as an infallible and rock-firm guide on everything under the sun, even though, on his own showing, he vacillates at every step All the same, you find, to your surprise, that the peasant hails him as his spokesman, labour as their protagonist (Trade Union Congress at Nagpur actually elected him as their President, with what

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* Literally a material aunt of the bridegroom and, withal, a paternal aunt of the bride, It may be rendered into English by the adage, 'running with the hare and hunting with the hounds'

disastrous consequence we all know*), the Communist patronises him, the Capitalist cottons to him, the artist hails him as a path-finder in *belles lettres,* the mill-owner gushes over him like a spinster, ignoring the disconcerting fact that he is actually spinning away without conviction to shine as a worthy heir to Gandhiji and a sentimental friend to the *daridranarayana,* a word he abhors ** In fact," he added after a pause, "he is nothing if not a chameleon When I once heckled him to lay his cards on the table he said he was temperamentally an individualist

* "At the Nagpur Congress," writes Jawaharlal in his Autobiography, "this question of the boycott of the Whitley Commission became a major issue and the left Wing triumphed I played a very undistinguished role I avoided acting with any group and played the par more of an impartial speaker than a directing President I was thus an almost passive spectator of the breaking up of the U T C" (Chapter XXVII),

I don't think this would be true now though, for fortunately, Panditji has, of late, taken good care to disown categorically the communist ways even if he still subscribes to the main gospel of socialism And even in those days he seems to have entertained deep misgivings about Russia and all that she stands for "I am very far from being a communist," he writes in his Autobiography My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century This *bourgeois* background follows me about and is naturally a source of irritation to many communists I dislike dogmatism and the regimentation and heresy hunts which seem to be a feature of modern communism I dislike also much that has happened in Russia, and especially the excessive use of violence in normal times " (Chapter LXVII)

** Jawaharlal writes in his Autobiography (page 192) I had no desire to confine myself to khadi propaganda, which seemed to me a relatively minor activity in view of the developing political situation " And writes elsewhere that he never liked the word *daridranarayana* (even though Gandhiji loved it) because the word in effect glorified poverty But what the word really means is that the Divine exists in the poor also, not exclusively (as Jawaharlal has taken it to mean for an incomprehensible reason) but ubiquitously The point is to have the vision that does not miss the Divine in the lowest of the low—an attitude that can hardly be taken exception to even from the commonsense point of view But then, as Subhash pointed out to me, when a man does not understand the essence of an experience he can hardly be expected to understand its ideology or vocabulary

and intellectually a socialist! Have you ever heard the like!

What you say, Subhash," I said, "amounts, when boiled down, to this—(isn't it?)—that he has more than one side to his nature But I don't see how that can be called a disqualification For the fact that he is wooed by different organisations and various types of men is surely not anything essentially reprehensible For instance, why should it have been wrong for him to preside at the T U C at Nagpur? Because he could not prove helpful, that seems to be the trend of your argument But at that rate you might also take him to task for hobnobbing with men of science who ask him so often to Preside at their Science Congress For surely, there too, he has never yet proved himself to have been more than decoratively helpful He complies because he just loves to be obliging, that's all Lastly, it is his admiration of Gandhiji which made him spin away perfunctorily even when his heart was not in it This, I admit is a more serious charge But then, Subhash, he has loved Gandhiji and you haven't Not-love seldom understands love's gambits and concessions Take my own case Sri Arobindo is surely as far apart from Russell as the heart's worship is from mind's carping Nevertheless I *have* experienced love for both for which both Aurobindonians and Russellians call me names But how could I help loving both, tell me that—since love is independent of will?

"You are making a fundamental mistake, Dilip," Subhash admonished "In the world of theory and speculation and dream—that is, where action is not involved in the same sense as it hourly is in politics or statecraft —you may be perfectly free to follow your contradic-

tory predilections But when, for good or for evil, your action is going to sway vast masses and you do seek that influence as a political leader, then, I say, you can't go on just indulging your divers whims with impunity I know full well we are not always consistent nor even wish to be, but once one chooses to lead an activist life, one has to come to grips with one's own self and decide to act at least with a plausible harmony if not flawless consistency Otherwise it will be sheer chaos! Practical politics, my dear Dilip, is not quite a stage set for your delectable Art nor is it a dream grove where dear chameleons are bred If a politician changes his hue and persuasion every third day he will only make confusion worse confounded You, as an artist, may be influnced by Russell and, withal, be readily subjugated by Sri Aurobindo Your personality may enriched in the process' I don't know if it always is, for I am ignorant of even the rudiments of your *maya* called Art with a capital A But this I know' that all Politics that means business must demand of its adherents a mastery of war--craft rather than art-craft At any rate this is certain that what is play to the artist may well be death to the statesman I shall give you an example and it did give me a rude shock, I can tell you Listen

' You know very well that Jawaharlal and I are both supposed to be firebrands in that we have set our minimum demand at complete independence Mark the adjective 'complete' Now, recall what happened in the Lahore Congress in 1929, under the august presidentship of your multy-mooded hero A joint resolution had been agreed upon among the leaders of all parties, offering servile co-operation to the Viceroy's pompous announcement about a new mummery a Round Table Confrence! The

Congress had never been under any illusions about the prospective farce—least of all Jawaharlal, for whatever may be his shortcomings, failure to see the broad trend of things has never been one of them You know, of course, what it came to finally the shameful compromise which only let the Congress down to conciliate those we could well afford to ignore the Moderates masquerading as Liberals, whom Jawaharlal, by the way, so refreshingly exposes in his Autobiography We were to promulgate at the Lahore Congress that we were ready, even eager, to co-operate on the basis of Dominion Status We were to throw overboard what Tilak had called his 'birthright'—and for what? Just a Temporary tactical advantage of dubious value I read somewhere about the chances of a half-blind idiot of spotting a black cat in a dark room on a moonless night Our chances of getting some advantage through jettisoning our ideals seemed almost as bright, and Jawaharlal knew it full well, as he has confessed himself in his Autobiography I refused to sign the disgraceful manifesto as he, too, had, at the start But later he was 'talked into signing' what he had known and condemned as wrong and dangerous You remember his incredible apology, don't you?"*

* To put Subhash's case more clearly I give below what Jawaharlal himself has to say "And yet that joint manifesto was a bitter pill for some of us To give up the demand for independence, even in theory and even for a short while, was wrong and dangerous, it meant that it was just a tactical affair, something to bargain with, not something which was essential and without which we could never be content So I hesitated and refused to sign the menifesto (Subhash Bose had definitely refused to sign it), but, as was not unusual with me, I allowed myself to be talked into signing Even so, I came away in great distress, and the very next day I thought of withdrawing from the Congress Presidentship, and wrote accordingly to Gandhiji I do not suppose I meant this seriously, though I was sufficiently upset A soothing letter from Gandhiji and three days of reflection calmed me " (Chapter XXVII *Autobiography*)

"Softly, softly, Subhash dear," I replied, albeit a little impressed now, in spite of myself, the fire of his speech was somewhat difficult to dismiss as mere heat since it did shed a deal of light as well "You forget that I had never read his confessions from *your* angle, nor had I had your searchlight of the man on the spot. Unlike you, I had focussed my attention more on his personality than on his official achievements and failures What you say today *has* indeed, shaken me, somewhat But I can't for the life of me see Jawaharlal as I see ever so many among his associates a shrewd temporiser-cum-diplomat "

"Neither do I, "Subhash acquiesced "But that is just why I must complain more bitterly against his docile amorphousness, thus letting himself be moulded by Gandhiji and Company Limited into any shape and pattern *they* choose You talked just now of his loving Gandhiji I have no quarrel with him on that score He may love him or adore him or genuflect to him to the top of his bent, that is none of my business But surely, this continual boosting of personal loyalty which forces one again and again to cramp one's style can't be right, especially in politics where such movements are so contagious Why not take a leaf out of the book of Gandhiji himself? Didn't he adore Gokhale? But whenever it came to the point, mind you, he took precious good care not to follow his idol An artist may afford to be decorative, Dilip He may even hug no end of endearing inconsistencies to cut a picturesque figure But for a man of action, a statesman, an administrator and, above all, one who aspires to grow into a world-figure—it were madness to think that one could do without a backbone "

'You have certainly set me thinking, Subhash," I owned after a pause "For I confess I never even thought of the possibility that Jawaharlal could be—well, what you have made him out to be But if I may still squeak a protest (*a la* Jawaharlal himself vis-a-vis Gandhiji), may I submit that when you are incorrigibly fair-minded you may indeed ridicule Sir Roger de Coverley's dictum that 'much can be said on both sides,' but you must feel nonetheless a sneaking sympathy for the man's liberality But perhaps this, too, you would laugh away as an artist's incurable penchant for making any figure look convincing through the magic persuation of his art "

"I shouldn't if I saw it an *artist*, but only on one condition that he would never toy with politics For *paradharma* is nothing if not *bhayavahah* If Jawaharlal really cares to be scrupulously fair to all sides qua an artist, then to prove a lighthouse of equity in this partisan world he should leave politics alone and dedicate himself to art Well, he has a remarkable capacity for literature, why doesn't he take to it as his *swadharma*?"

"What is *your* answer to the poser?"

Subhash laughed

"There you have me, Dilip For he often appears to me as baffling as a sphinx Take, for instance, his fumings against idolatry and yet look at his breath-taking capitulations to Gandhiji (though, of course, always under protest), possibly wanting to superimpose on us the idolatry of Moscow! Wait—I haven't finished yet I don't really mean I can't understand his idolatry of the Mahatma I am not such a fool as I look—ha ha ha! For any fool can see that he idolises Moscow with his brain and the Mahatma with his heart Add he pro-

tests and changes his posture everytime without turning a hair, only to feel more complacent about it all But after all, Dilip, when one *has* undertaken to lead people, one can't just go on extolling anti-imperialism and non-violence in the same breath One must take sides in the sphere of action, willy-nilly No Dilip," he added in a lower key "You may admire Jawaharlal the admirable and estimable to your heart's content, but one thing I will beg leave to emphasise if he really wants to serve India through politics he must first of all make sure of his foundations For if he doesn't take care to seek solid ground under his feet, the ground won't be so obliging as to materialise under his feet either ergo, he will never be able to stand perpendicular anywhere "

TWENTY-FIVE

On Panditji, qua politician, I will not venture to comment, not only because it is not my metter to adjudicate on politics, but also, and chiefly, because I roundly agree with his sober view that those who do not put their shoulders to the wheel can render little service by constantly picking holes from the vantage ground of an easy chair Subhash, as a colleague, had every right to criticise him But I myself (though I have a right of sorts since, willy-nilly, we are all intimately concerned with two major human activities science and politics) have too genuine a respect for Panditji's sincerity and rectitude not to feel conscience-stricken about criticising him harshly My only regret is that he should have gone out of his way to condemn religion, especially after having had truck with a religious luminary like Gandhiji as his master for well over two decades It is all the more a

pity because he suffered stolid rationalists with no kernel experience of religion to cajole him into apodeictic inconsistencies This was borne home to me, rather through the light of contrast, thanks to the mystic and refreshing personality of Subhash who visited us like a mountain-whiff because he did have communion from time to time with the topless heights of the spirit Panditji, on the other hand, gave one the impression of an honest and graceful passion-flower which blooms in a wilderness of inertia and iniquity, and the next moment of a petulant bud which disowns the sky as an alien and claims kinship with its parent wilderness which is humanity in politics

When, however, I essay thus to bring out Subhash through the helpful device of contrast, I do not at all imply that in actuality he *always* gave off the mystic scent That is possible only with those whose personality has achieved an idealpeak of consistency or, shall I say, psychic integration after an arduous uphill dicipline For it is only then that the surface irrelevancies disappear so that the essence of the personality can crystallise on the summit into the harmonious nucleus overlaid by appearances But till this summit achievement is reached man must stay put in the sad and inexplicable tangle of anomalies, and a tussle must go on in his lower nature During this war period the deeper aspirations may often get the worst of it and the light and perfume of the higher nature remain imperceptible, precipitating only an impression of darkness and turbidity And it is in such moments of deep dereliction, as Subhash often realised in jail, that one could get the maximum help from Gurus, saints and seers In the *Bhagavata* Sri Krishna assures Uddhava

The sun to mortals gives their earthly eyes
Sages—the vision of Truth that cleaves the skies *

It is no mere poet's fancy Only, to win this boon of vision some conditions have to be fulfilled by the aspirant One of these is *dinata*, humility Not for nothing did Christ say "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Panditji would probably protest again in irritation that the religious spirit only damages the nature by putting a premium on lachrymose self-abasement That is why it is claimed in our *Mahabharata* that the *arcana* of true spirituality lies hidden in the heart**—a truth Subhash could see at once in his hours of anguished aspiration but Panditji failed to glimpse because he wanted the vast truths buried in the cavern of the heart to be attested by little rushlights of the mind) And not for nothing has it been laid down as one of the first tenets of *Guruvad* that the disciple must unquestioningly accept the Gurus lead For this alone can create the right mood in which the right vision can come to flower

TWENTY-SIX

In 1924, the Swaraj Party, under the aegis of C R. Das, captured the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta Subhash was appointed in April as its Chief Executive Officer, a role he filled with remarkable efficiency as well as distinction Nevertheless he was arrested in October under Regulation III, better known as "the lawless law,"

* *Santo dishanti chakshumshi bahirarkah samutthitah* (11-26-34)

** *Dharmasya tattwam nihitam guhayam—guha* means cave, symbolising the heart

because the person detained under this law day neither defend himself nor even know what he is accused of Subhash was first taken to Alipore Central Jail, then on to Berhampore Jail whence he was transferred to Mandalay There, gradually, his health gave way

I used to feel worried about disquieting rumours that reached us about his contracting some mysterious incurable disease There was nothing I could do about it, but I kept on writing to him and mostly about the message of spirituality and my reactions to *Yoga*, because I thought it might help him in his lonely cell He wrote back beautiful letters in reply in one of which he wrote (Appendix VIII)

> I subscribe to most of what you write about Sri Aurobindo if not to all He is a *dhyani*—a comtemplative, and I feel, goes even deeper than Vivekananda, though I have a profound reverence for the latter So I agree with you when you say that one may from time to time—and, on occasion, for a long spell—need to remain withdrawn in silent contemplation in perfect seclusion But here there *is* a danger the active side of a man might get atrophied if he remained cut off too long from the tides of life and society . This need not apply to a handful of authentic *sadhaks* of uncommon genius, but the common run, the majority, ought to take to action and service as the main plank of their *sadhana*

When I had first sought the comparative seclusion of an Ashram in 1929 I still held more or less the same views as he regarding seclusion and service to humanity By and by, however, as my outlook began to change due to a new orientation, such worldly wisdom as expressed in the above letter appeared to me less and less sustain-

ing, and I felt more and more in line with Sri Ramakrishna's standpoint that one can act or serve humanity best only when one has received an injunction—*adesh*—from the Divine Also, it was borne in upon me through vivid experience that without the Guru's help and Grace the inner ear could never be sure of having heard the *adesh* correctly, thanks to the deep kinks of our ego I wrote now and again to Subhash to this effect He didn't always agree, but he was profiting nonetheless by his solitude in his cells in that his inwardness was unquestionably touching profundities it never had plumbed before, as shown in his letter written from the Madras Penitentiary

But, unlike Pandit Jawaharlal, his health always deteriorated in detention The ugly rumours about his malignant malady, which had been in the air for some time past, now crystallised into a public alarm tuberculosis! At once the Press raised a hue and cry he had lost forty pounds in weight! Thereupon, the Home Member of the Government of Bengal intimated to him that he might proceed straight to Europe for treatment if he so wished—only he would not be allowed to visit Calcutta or any other Indian port He declined indignantly

Just then C R Das died, suddenly, in May, 1925 Subhash was deeply cut up and wrote to me from Mandalay (Appendix VI)

> You can imagine what dominates my thought to-day I believe there is but one thought in all minds now the death of our great Deshbandhu When I first read the news in print I could hardly credit my eyes But, alas, the report is cruelly true! Ours is, indeed, an unfortunate nation

His health, after this, went on deteriorating faster,

till, at last, he had to be released unconditionally in May 1927 on medical grounds

In January, 1930 he was again sentenced for sedition to nine months' rigorous imprisonment In August, the same year, he was elected Mayor of Calcutta, even though he was still in detention Next month he was released and in 1931 arrested once more under Regulation III of 1818 Once again his health went to pieces till his condition became so alarming that the Government, afrer a year's detention, allowed him to proceed to Europe, for treatment I had appealed to him to accept He wrote back in 1933 that he had already decided to the same effect and added that he would like me to furnish him with a few letters of introduction to my friends in Europe He regretted he had profited but little from his first trip to Europe which he would like to make good now In his later twenties he often told us privately that he envied me and Rudra* our deeper understanding of the heart of Europe whereupon we two used to retort that he might have achieved the same wisdom if only he hadn't (with such stubborn bravery) shied at the very shadow of woman The shaft had possibly gone home In any case, I was delighted and gave him a few letters among which there was one addressed to a very dear friend of mine, an opera-singer She was a Hungarian by birth and had married a famous Austrian writer Rene Fulop Muller I had been very happy as their guest in Vienna, first in 1922 and next in 1927

A few years later, in 1937, Madame Muller visited India and was our guest in our Ashram Her singing made such a profound impression on my poet friend Chad-

*The late Sudhir Kumar Rudra, who was then a professor in Allahabad University

wick that he wrote a lovely poem which I cannot resist the temptation of quoting

MOUSIKE

The air grows one with a voice,
Some magical sway
Has utterly changed the paltry hour
To a strangeness which is yet our own true home.
The calyx of the song no longer laps
The slowly opening silence that is Light
Now the silence is a calm blue sky
Of whiteness, and they wing with a lovely motion
Of a rapture unmingled and unmarred
O harmony of incorruptible form!
Stay further—in the hour-glass every sand-grain
If of gold—Time's metronome
Is changed to the subtlest weaving
Of the Life Dance and the Hymn of Love

(Sri Aurobindo wrote to me on 24-2-1937 "She is, indeed, what you described her to be" and then "I have thought of the name 'Nilima' for Heddy as a symbol of her aspiration")

TWENTY-SEVEN

A few months later, Subhash wrote to me that Mrs. Muller had been "an angel" to him in his illness She also, in her turn, wrote to me enthusiastically that so many things about him were *wunderbar and fablehaft* (wonderful and fabulous) and she was deeply impressed by his *Seelengrosze* (greatness of soul) If only a few more ambassadors of such nobility would visit Europe,

she wrote, India would need no further propaganda She gave a great reception to him and Udayshankar also about the same year, and sent me photographs of both of them But with Subhash she was, naturally, more intimate I mention this to underline the profound psychological change that had come over him in the course of a decade's suffering in the hard school of life He had come to realise that a stolid indifference to all that is best in the sex he fought shy of could be anything but rewarding If I had ever been of any real help to him in his evolution I should have liked to think it were here in the world of art and bonhomie where the touch-me-not-ism of the puritan outlook on life is obsolete But so long as one appraises one's achievements through the convex lens of one's egoism, wouldn't it be rather risky —as I often asked Subhash playfully—to assess the net value of one's contribution in any field under the sun? I remember how appreciatively he was wont to laugh when I quoted Pope's

To observations which ourselves we make
We grow more partial for the observer's sake!

"But then," he once demurred, 'when the impossible lens refuses to be scraped level, how would you cure this partiality?"

In any event this was the lesson Subhash had been learning, willy-nilly, in the school of Frustration I could almost sense it through his letters Also Nilima (Heddy) used often to write to me from Vienna of this unpretentious character of her charge when she tended him in his sick-bed I was indeed delighted and wrote to that effect to Sri Aurobindo, wanting him to work more on him for his spiritual transformation, though, I must confess

my native scepticism croaked from time to time that Nilima's report sounded a little too good to be lastingly true

But I refused to be forewarned Wasn't Nilima writing to me enthusiastically about this trait of his character? And she assured me that Subhash was not only *niedrig* (humble) like a *Mystiker*, but also *unverfalscht* (unspoilt) like a child "For instance," she added, "you cannot imagine how overjoyed he is whenever you send him Sri Aurobindo's holy flowers of benediction"

Such tidings naturally encouraged me greatly and I opened myself more and more to him till I came—alas, a little prematurely—to persuade myself that he was, indeed, one of our circle The result was disastrous in that I, somewhat unwittingly, rubbed him the wrong way through my unwarranted over-confidence in his conversion It happened like this

Elated with outside admiration and the sense of power returning, Subhash lost sight of a deep truth he had almost come to accept while in prison, namely, that such noise as we constantly made in our puny worlds of egoistic make-believe and self-interest seldom precipitated any solid good out from the turbid waters of life So he once wrote off a letter to me, rather unceremoniously, that I had better come out of my seclusion now since it was 'necessary' to establish personal contacts such as he was doing in Europe—in order to be able to achieve anything that mattered

I was a little shocked at this all-too-sudden reversal of front on his part and wrote back somewhat assertively that I had long ceased to believe in action for action's sake, especially in the field of politics The only valuable lesson to be derived from human contacts generally,

I added, was that till we humans changed a little, these contacts were unlikely to change things very much Furthermore, I wrote, I had already had a plethora of "human" contacts and that was why I had turned finally to the Guru's I then gave him the last verse of my poem on *Guruvad*

The Guruvadi sings his hymn round you, O guru, seeing daily the shadow of the Impersonal in the mirror of your personality

He seeks to worship you again and again in the temple of his soul to fashion in himself ever more faithfully the image of your perfection

He says not that the rainbow is the shadow-form of a moment, nor that all forms are undivine

He says not that all embodiments must needs be transient and chimerical because the incorporeal could never seek a finite mansion *

I do not remember what else I wrote, but I am certain that there was nothing in my letter that could be taken as a fling at him, personally Naturally, I had to demur to *his* secular interpretation of the disinterested action (*nishkama karma*) of the *Gita*, contending that the action approved of by the *Gita* had little in common with what is called 'disinterested' by persons interested only in the success of their activities

But alas, Subhash took it amiss For he wrote back to me what was perhaps the most passionately expostulating letter he had ever penned with me for a target Unfortunately, I have lost the letter but I remember very well its contents as here he hurt me for the first

* This poem, with the original Bengali, was published in full subsequenntly in my book entitled *Anami* and later in my novel, *Miracles Do Still Happen.*

and last time in his life What he wrote amounted to this that he "despaired" of our country when "men of the calibre of Dilipkumar and Anilbaran" could plump for blind faith as against enlightened reason How could one possibly invest a "human Guru with attributes that belonged only to Divinity?" His position was that faith lacked finality in that every "faithist" might concoct a credo utterly different from that of another, to be branded as an "infidel" Only reason could help people to grow into some sort of fertile harmony The "incarnate Gods" who battended in India on the gullibility of the credulous had done untold harm and we, the vigilant, should know better in the twentieth century than to swell the ranks of such weak-kneed adherents, and so he went on and on in an access of exasperation In a letter previous to this he had written that he failed to see how Sri Aurobindo's great *bani* (dictum) that "Yoga must include life and not exclude it" could possibly square with the life of seclusion we were leading I infer from all this, that the dazzle of European activism had contributed not a little to his temporary aberration

For the reader's convenience I will sum up in one letter Sri Aurobindo's rejoinder to the charges set forth above He wrote

> Dilip, but why on earth does your 'despairing' friend want everybody to agree with him and follow his own preferred line of conduct or belief? That is the never-realised dream of the politician, or realised only by the violent compression of the human mind and life, which is the latest feat of the men of action The 'incarnate Gods, Gurus and spiritual men' of whom he so bitterly complains—are more modest in their hopes and are satisfied with a hand-

ful or, if you like, an Ashramful of disciples. And even these they don't ask for, but they come, they come. So are they not—these denounced 'incarnates'—nearer to reason and wisdom than the political leaders? Unless, of course, one of them makes the mistake of founding a universal religion, but that is not *our* case. Moreover, he upbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith. But what is his own view of things except a reasoned faith? You believe according to your faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to his opinion, which is natural also, but no better, so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason. But so are the opinions of his political opponents according to *their* reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is reasoning to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face—they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end he prevails who has the greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world as it is and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to right reason—whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter of fact, there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions, there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason—multiplied up to the discordant innumerable. Each reasons according to his view of things, his opinion, that is, his mental constitution and mental preference. So what is the use of running down faith which, after all, gives something to hold on to amidst the contradictions of an enigmatic

universe? If one can get at a knowledge that knows, it is another matter, but so long we have only an ignorance that argues,—well, there is a place still left for faith—even faith may be a glint from the knowledge that knows, however far-off, and meanwhile there is not the slightest doubt that it helps to get things done There's a bit of reasoning for you! Just like all other reasoning too, convincing to the convinced, but not to the unconvincible, that is, to those who don't accept the ground upon which the reasoning dances Logic, after all, is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else

Your main point is of course quite the right answer all this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act 'Yoga must include life and not exclude it' does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right The present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical paralled is a signal proof of the illusion under which they labour Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered From within outward is, indeed, the rule But 'within' does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface One must go deep and find the Soul, the Self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be

—instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect things we are The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the Godhead within and without us

I sent this letter to Subhash Nilima wrote back from Vienna that he brooded long over it but in the end decided that I was wrong, as depending too much on God led nowhere in these days when accept we must the *mantra* of "do and die," *a la* St Joan, repudiating that of "wait and see," *a la* Asquith I felt a trifle deflated and wrote to Sri Aurobindo

O Guru, I enclose a very fine poem of N entitled *The Yawning West* The context of the poem is Subhash's robustious letter in which he enthuses over the modern *arrivisme* of the West Incidentally, I was telling N regretfully about Europe's frantic drive for the charnel-house in a fit of *rationalised lunacy*, as Russel puts it in his latest book, *In praise of Idleness* What Russell says amounts to this that only through 'leisure of mind' can we 'acquire any knowledge' that is worthwhile I wonder what will be the reaction of Subhash to such a view *Qu'en dites-vous*?

Dilip

Sri Aurobindo sent me a prompt answer the next morning

But, Dilip, you forget that the rationality of politicians has, perforce, to move within limits if they

were to allow themselves to be as clear-minded as Russell, their occupation would be gone! It is not everybody who can be as cynical as a Birkenhead or as philosophical as a C R Das and go on with political reason or political make-believe in spite of knowing what it all came to—*arrivisme* in the one and Patriotism in the other case

I wrote back, explaining

But no, Guru, I have not forgotten it any more than I have forgotten the blazing fact that any flourish of enthusiasm is huzzaed in this our gullible age as the finest application of our vitality which makes puppets of us mostly with the pathetic delusion that we are serving Humanity with a capital H What I was driving at was Subhash's falling under the spell of activism the moment he came out of his seclusion That is why he started thinking once again, alas (to quote your own words), that "by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right" I wish my great-souled friend would recapture the right vision if only to be delivered from this sad delusion that by dint of blind energy and common logic one could salvage the shipwreck of civilization The mammoth guns of the West also have been pressed into service to lead us straight to the millennium, but the result has not been inspiring, to say the least Apropos, Russel comments, diagnosing the malady of the world today, that when we are really 'seized with lunacy' we are applauded for 'displaying remarkable wisdom'

Sri Aurobindo rejoined

> You are right again, Dilip Only you seem to forget that human reason is a very convenient and accommodating instrument and works only in the circle set for it by interest, partiality and prejudice The politicians reason wrongly or insincerely and have power to enforce the results of their reasoning so as to make a mess of the world's affairs the intellectuals reason and show what their minds show them, which is far from being always the truth, for it is generally decided by intellectual preference and the mind's inborn or education-inculcated angle of vision,—but even if they see the truth, they have no powers to enforce it So between blind power and seeing impotence the world moves, achieving destiny through a mental muddle

Then he went on to comment on my last sentence

> Seized with lunacy? But this implies that the nation is ordinarily led by reason Is it so? Or even by common sense? Masses of men act upon their vital push, not according to reason individuals, too, do the same If they call it their reason, it is as a lawyer to plead the client's cause
>
> Sri Aurobindo

I wanted to send Subhash a copy of my correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, but thought better of it as Nilima wrote to me that he was convalescing rather slowly after his operation So I was anxious again and waited to hear from him

But he did not write, for which I was sad for a time till Nilima wrote again that he had decided,

against my request as well as the advice of friends, to return home I felt apprehensive but he just could not stay away He knew for certain that he would be arrested again—but unlike Panditji, I repeat—he had struck far too many roots deep into the land of his birth so that he could not help but languish outside India like a suckling weaned from its mother Besides, it hurt his pride to have to stay away, an exile, to dodge prospective imprisonment, however painful or even shattering

He was duly taken in custody the moment he landed in Bombay (April 1936)—under the same 'lawless law' In my anxiety I wrote to him again but this time it was only silence that met me from the other side

I felt a growing malaise Had I hurt him? Should I not have apologised unqualifiedly? Ought I not to try to see him in prison? I could not make up my mind

Early in 1937, a rumour got abroad once more that Subhash was going to be released unconditionally I asked Gurudev's permission to visit Calcutta I pleaded for my eagerness had I not been full eight years in seclusion and so did I not deserve a little relaxation in the pleasant playground of life? Gurudev must have smiled a deep smile, but he was tolerance itself and *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*—so I was allowed to take it easy for a brief interlude

It so happened that only a few days after my arrival in Calcutta—on the 17th of March, to be more precise—I got a telephone message from Elgin Road that Subhash had just been released I was summoned at once

I drove instantly to his place—the same old Elgin Road house No sooner had I entered the front room

than he came out I was shocked to see his emaciated frame, though he looked more spiritual than ever But there were the tell-tale rings of shadow under his keen eyes! He threw his arms round me and wept like a child I was moved, too, but I must confess I was even more surprised For Subhash to lose his grip over himself! I set it down to the stiff letter he had written to me in a huff Could the phenomenon of his weeping bear any other explanation?

But as we talked on, I was struck by a deeper spiritual change that had taken place in him Years of struggle and disappointment, super-added to frequent incarcerations, had mellowed the exterior austerity of the youthful ascetic For an ascetic he had always been, temperamentally, not one of the far-too-common formalist or phlegmatic brand—for he was surely not built of the stuff cold solitaries are made of None could ever dub him world-weary, still less an escapist Nor did he ever care to live cheek by jowl with the *mayavadis* who, he complained somehow failed to convince even when there could be no questioning their sincerity He writes in his Autobiography (*An Indian Pilgrim*, Chapter X)

> There was a time when I believed that the doctrine of Maya represents the quintessence of Knowledge Today I would hesitate to subscribe to that position What I cannot live up to—what is not workable—I feel inclined to discard Shankar's doctrine of Maya intrigued me for a long time, but ultimately I found that I could not accept it because I could not live it

For all that, he looked an ascetic for two obvious reasons first, because his reaction to home-life was one of shirking and secondly, because he did give one the

impression that he had a deep kinship with those mystics who had inspired the Sufi couplet

Sara husool ishkaki na kamion me hai
Jo umr raigan hai wohi raigan nahi

When I waste my years to win thee, Friend!
'Tis then I best achieve my end
Only that life was rich in gain
Which strove and strove for thee in vain

As I looked intently at his wistful yet determined face that morning, I felt a deep joy that I had not been mistaken in my fundamental estimate of him For he *was* a mystic in the essence of his being, a dreamer who counted the world well lost for God, only he had, for the nonce put his Motherland on his dream-throne of Divinity I cannot of course prove this home but then has it not been admitted even by a great rationalist (Lowes Dickinson) that "nothing that is important can be proved!"

And I never *wanted* to prove it either My object in writing my reminiscences of the man I loved as a friend (who was, withal an idol of my adolescence and early youth) is only to strive to repay the deep debt I owe him And it is because this debt has grown sacred. because he *was* a mystic *par excellence*, that I have essayed in my own small way to depict him as I have known him Whether my delineation is convincing or not is not germane to my aim "You have a right to action—not to fruits thereof", says the *Gita Karmanyevadhikaraste ma yhaleshu kadachana* So to proceed

He didn't talk much that morning He had never been a great talker even in his most expansive mood, especially in company There were a few other friends and visitors present Nevertheless he dropped a few

words now and then hinting at what he had gone through once he said, laughingly, that if he had failed to grow wings he had, at least, slipped his dear old moorings Which was true For his eyes had won a new expression softened, indeed, with unspoken sorrows but irradiate with a strange lustre which had not been there eight years ago in the heyday of his activism What I imply by this I will endeavour now to explain in his own words, as far as possible

TWENTY EIGHT

Subhash asked me to spend an evening with him a few weeks later I accepted with alacrity as it was always difficult to catch him alone, whenever I visited him he was "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes," of friends, relatives and admirers We badly wanted a tete-a-tete

He had set apart one entire evening for me I found him a little less run down, physically The shadows under his eyes were less pronounced, but he looked tired still—and brooding

I referred to it but, as was his wont whenever we talked about his own health, he waved it all aside with his characteristic nonchalance He warmed up only when I muttered something about his accepting suffering with such a high aloofness

He laughed and said "But please don't let off the protentous word 'martyr' I see trembling on your lips"

Let me explain the reference with an extract from a letter he had written to me from Mandalay Jail (Appendix V)

> You have given to my incarceration the name of martyrdom This only testifies to the sympathy

native to your character as also to your nobility of heart But since I have some sense of humour and proportion—I hope so, anyway—I can hardly arrogate to myself the martyr's high title Against hauteur and conceit I want to be sleeplessy vigilant

I had been touched because here the intonation had had no tang of the conventional modesty He had, indeed, been always sincere by nature, only, in the first flush of youth—directly after his return from England, in 1921—he had grown for a time a little too sure of his way and outlook on things in general This I told him, for the first time, that evening

He gave a low laugn tinged with sadness

"Of course self-confidence one must have," he said reflectively, "but one should be equally on one's guard against cocksureness, as you say"

This gave me the opening I had been seeking, to be able to remedy the unfortunate misunderstanding

"But don't you think," I said, "that it is easier said than done?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Well," I hesitated, 'it—it's best to be frank, I think What I wished to ask you was if you were at one with me about the need of being on one's guard against self-esteem and cocksureness, how on earth could you possibly misunderstand me about *Guruvad?* Couldn't you see that the only point I had wanted to make was that, human judgment being so liable to err, a wise Guru's guidance could not but help?"

"I saw that much all right," he said "But then didn't *you* see what I on my side had wanted on warn you against? You know very well I never disapproved of *Guruvad* at its best how could I, having from

my childhood thrilled to the romance of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda? But that doesn't mean there's no danger involved when one makes a cult or a fetish of this Do you not see yourself how *Guruvad* is interpreted and distorted, generally, by the man in the street and why? Just to have the delectable feeling that the Guru will do everything for you—from *justoshelai to chandipath** as our Bengali proverb has it Hasn't the *purushakara* of India been sapped too often, alas, by petitioning *daiva*! and hasn't *Guruvad* in practice served too often as a cloak for our national inertia?"

"There few will disagree with you," I said, though I wish you had looked at such things not so much from the national as from the individual's point of view In the *Mahabharat*, Bhishma tells Yudhishthira that just as without a fertile soil the seed sown cannot sprout, even so, without *purushakara daiva* becomes abortive‡ That is why, says Bhishma, the wise have assimilated *purushakara* to the ploughed soil and *daiva* to the seed, which means that they are interdependent I felt much struck by the simile when I re-read the great epic of late I quote this only to conciliate you, Subhash, not to confound with classical authorities My point is that our ancient wisdom never really awarded in favour of inertia when it extolled *Guruvad* Let me add also that no real Guru will encourage a disciple to grow into a lack-lustre ruminant whose mass of flesh gets the

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* The phrase means literally—from making a shoe to reading Scriptures

† *Purushakara* means personal initiative as contrasted with fatalism which denies the value of personal effort, since all is done by *daiva* that is, the Gods who play with humans as they will

‡ *Yatha bijamvina kshetramuptam bhavati nishpalam, tatha purushakarena vina daivam na sidhyati* (*Anushasana Parva—Mahabharat*)

better of his bones And then you should have had at least this much faith in me that I wouldn't take to a Guru like a bondslave who is unwilling to pay for his own salvation Besides, so far as I know, in things of the spirit you have never followed Panditji who always prejudges the issue without any first-hand experience first of the heart of the mystic lore In wisdom a mere surface-view seldom gives the clue to the Truth that redeems But the way you are talking now has a curious family resemblance to our esteemed friend, who makes such unwarranted statements about religion standing for 'blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry' and so on —read his Autobiography "

"Leave him alone," he flushed "What have I in common with him ideologically ?"

"But that is precisely why you should not indulge in generalisations about the ruinous consequences of the wrong kind of Guru-worship, for that would be arguing from false premises What I mean is you should not start with a few culled data about the pseudo-religious and false prophets You wrote to me once from Malay that you looked upon Sri Aurobindo as going even deeper than Vivekananda How then could you think that such a man would smile on disciples who truckled to him like milk-sops to be shown short-cuts to salvation ? Didn't you read in his book *The Mother* · *'Your surrender must be self-made and free the surrender of a living being, not of an inert automation'?*

He waggled a finger menacingly as he gave me a wry smile

"Now now now, Dilip," he heckled, "you are at it again, making it look as if it was Sri Aurobindo I lashed at "

"But but but, Subhash," I mimicked, "would you have wasted so much of your precious breath and fire if your target had been a mere artist and hero-worshipper like my humble self?"

He held a hand of mine in his

"Please do not take too seriously all that I wrote in a huff" His voice trailed off into a tender cadence "You are too alert psychologically not to be aware that we don't always mean the things we say when we are rubbed the wrong way I would even go so far as to say that our *dushta Saraswati** loves in her playful moods to make us say just the opposite of what we believe and even cherish in our heart of hearts"

This new note of tolerance and self-criticism did surprise me, the more so because he had always advocated in his activist enthusiasm Swami Vivekananda's flaming dictum What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel, not softening namby-pamby ideas" I was very glad because I had often wished that he might pause now and then to look whither he was being led by the mixed forces around him which militated against a calm appraisal of his bearings I told him this and added "I am really very glad, Subhash, that you have drawn a little nearer to folks like us who are not built of your heroic stuff and so ask now and again whither we are bound"

He kept silence for a little, then said with a pensive smile "And I am glad that I have made you so glad, but then you see, my jail-life has been chiefly responsible for

* In Bengali the *dushta Saraswati* (literally, the wicked Goddess of Garrulity) is supposed to perch now and then on the tongue of the unwary to make him say things he regrets afterwards "The Old Adam" in English would be a rather inadequate rendering of such a picturesque deity

my learning to be introspective, willy-nilly But since you say so refreshingly that the gulf between us has shrunk now, I may tell you that I did feel a joy now and then when, in my seclusion, a new world opened before me little by little in the measure the old world was shut out, as you told me so categorically the other day Only, unlike you, I had to submit to it all chafing, though even that forced submission inculcated humility and resignation But the strange thing was that this attitude, which had previously looked so hurtful, proved indeed, very helpful in the next phase of my evolution, bringing a light in which I saw my own self revealed to me almost in an apocalyptic was, if you will forgive such a purple word
I smiled as he paused before he resumed "You spoke just now of surrender of one's self-will and preconceptions I am afraid I am not quite sure that such an attitude would be good for me But then question probably didn't ever truly arise in my case For what I was up against was a rebellious spirit which eroded my vitals, so much so that it actually started eating into my health which I was so anxious to preserve But I couldn't I was restless within and my heart-ache all but sapped my vitality"

"Yes, I could see my health ebbing away, under my very nose," he went on "But what was I to do? I had no Guru to guide me I began watching my movements I am afraid I am getting somewhat long-winded So I will pass by my discoveries also for the reason that they were not verifiable at this stage But the long and the short of it all was that through my trials and tribulations I realised progressively why humility, *dinata*, and charity, *titiksha* had been extolled by our Sages and Saints as among our chief pathfinders in life For these two

helpmates showed me, as none else could, why we should never judge others too harshly since we are all more or less blind and, shall I say, feckless creatures Anyway the marvel of it is that it's only when we truly realise how desperately weak we are that the real strength upsurges and permeates our being from depths we know nothing of* And every realisation brings in its wake a change in the stuff we are made of The change in me enjoined me to be ruthlessly honest I resolved that I must watch my every movement and pass judgment on it even as I would on that of any outsider And I can tell you that the vow, once I put it to practice, taught me not a little tolerance till it came eventually to this that I felt that I was called upon, even in the thick of the fight, not only to be lenient to my opponents but even to love them. Of course," he added with a half-smile, "I need hardly assure you that I am not nearly as naive as to claim that to feel aspiration is to reach the goal To desire something, surely, is not as good as possessing it I know all this and I know also why it is so difficult to have one's opponents It's because our self-love just won't let us see that others are as good as ourselves That is why it is so difficult" He gave a sigh and added with a pensive smile "Could we but break the back of our fear that this love for others is not a standing menace to our central self-love, we might perhaps act with more real abandon So you see, I know, to my cost, how difficult it is to love our neighbours, let alone loving our enemies When I was an adolescent, I read somewhere that the Buddha had said that one should love all creatures with the same in-

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* Cf Sri Aurobindo's (*Savitri* Book II, Canto 6)
In our defeated hearts God's strength survives
And victory's star lights still our desperate road

tensity as the mother loves her only child I can still recapture the joy—the wings it gave me But," his voice dropped, "as I grew in total knowledge I dwindled in power of love—of the type Buddha spoke about But then Dilip," he gave me a melancholy smile, "when you look at life, don't you find a warning writ large—here, there and everywhere—that there is no royal road to any realisation worth having? No, there never gleamed for me a path worth treading that was strewn with roses You have elected to follow the path of *Guruvad* I have, I confess, been often dubious of your wisdom But the moment I saw you the other day I had my misgivings dispelled If the tree is to be judged by its fruit, then you can't be dismissed out of hand as a phantom-chaser, whatever Jawaharlal's darling Russia may say" A faint smile of irony flickered on his lips but only for a moment The next moment he resumed serious as sepulchre "If I have learnt tolerance and charity you have learnt—shall I tell you my reading? All right then listen You talked to me at some length today," he went on, "about your trials and tribulations, your flights and falls—no no, how can you think I will babble about it to others, not having your gift of the gab either—"

"Subhash—"

"Oh laugh it down, man!" And we laughed

"But listen," he himself broke the lull that ensued "What was I saying? Yes I was watching you keenly, assaying you, registering your every word, accent and stress, when you spoke without reserve about what you thought of your own possibilities You gave vent to your doubts, you hinted at your disappointments, you even tried to fob me off which your growing cynicism but not once did you breathe a word of disloyalty to your God and

Guru, not once could you convince me, with all your doubts, that you lacked faith, because not once did you vent a passing regret about having thrown away your chances of a bright career Man alive! how can I, after this, still take you at your word that you were a born sceptic? But I won't embarrass you any further let's change the subject by all means Only I must tell you, the other day I read somewere about a saying of Yeats that God has everything to give to Man, but Man's one and only possible gift to God is Faith I was strangely moved, for Christ was surely right when he characterised the common run of humanity, the scribes and Pharisees, as men of little faith That is why, Dilip, even when I feel deep down in my soul that I should love even my enemies,, in the thick of the fight I catch myself mistrusting its feasibility But then, when all is said, to keep the end up is difficult on any path " He paused once more as his rich bass voice quavered But he was himself again in a moment

"I thank you, Dilip, that you came out of your seclusion to see me," he went on "Only do stay with us for a whilo, don't revert too soon to your ivory tower You may not need us but we need you, I repeat"

As I returned home that night under the stars that peeped through the passing clouds I marvelled who was the wiser of the two—the Irishman who had sighed

Come away
With the fairies hand in hand
For the world is more full of weeping
Than you can understand *

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* W. B Yeats

or the Englishman who laughed

The world is hot and cruel,
We are weary of heart and hand
But the world is more full of glory
Than you can understand *

And then I suddenly remembered, in the hush of the night when everybody had gone to sleep, an unforgettable quatrain of Sri Aurobindo

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning,
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain,
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and beauty again

And, in a flash, I saw Subhash in a new light, a richer light that only vigils through dark nights of the soul may win Not that I could bring myself approve of dark pain and suffering with which "our earth is soaked from crust to centre"—to quote a great mystic novelist,† since that would be morbid For, I mused, if the realist's perception that "all imperfection is to us evil" was true, the mystic's perception must be truer still, that "all evil is in travail of the eternal good, for all is an imperfection which is the first condition—in the law of life evolving out of Inconscience—of a greater perfection in the manifesting of the hidden divinity "‡ I confess I still fail to understand why it could not be ordained otherwise, but in the last analysis, how much do we really understand of the fathomless flowers of life evolving out of Inconscience? As I paced the terrace on the night under the stars that seem-

* G K Chesterton
† Dostoievski in his novel, *Brothers Karamazov*
‡ Quoted from Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*

ed to be twinkling in derision at the puny self-important intellect of man, I visualised the mellowed face of the activist who had told me that evening how strangely it had been borne home to him through the very ruin of his hopes that he must learn "not only to be lenient to one's antagonists but also to love them" And I saw, dimly, a new meaning and augury of the "eternal good" that was progressively "manifesting the hidden Divinity" through life's fire and shadow, ecstasy and anguish I felt grateful to Subhash as never before in the silent watches of that memorable night

TWENTY-NINE

I have often wondered, while I have discussed my monitor with my friends who could not concur with my estimate of him whether I have been partial to him because of this my deep sense of indebtedness All I can say is that I have tried my best not to be, even though I cannot too loudly assert that here I have been successful all through I do, indeed, feel tempted, sometimes, to call in the great Goethe to plead for me

Sincere I will be—that I promise thee
*But who achieves impartiality ?**

I feel tempted because I see the force of his honest confession All the same, I can and do claim that I have never conciously limned him otherwise than as I have seen him Nor have I ever supported him even once whenever I have felt that he was making a *faux pas* or defended a course of action which his higher self could not possibly have endorsed, not to mention me repeatedly

* *Aufrichtig zu zein kann ich versprechen unparteiish zu zein, aber nicht Maximen und Reflexionen* Goethe

urging him to stand by his *swadharma* of a spiritual *karmayogi* and nation-builder But even when I say this I glimpse again the eyes of the stars on that night, the twinkling stars of irony which seemed to tease me "How much do we really know, friend, to be so sure about the *swadharma* of anybody under the sun?" And then, with a sigh, I have to admit that it is difficult in this unstable world of ebb and flow to be ever quite sure of solid ground under one's feet And yet I cannot persuade myself that those who have an impression of Subhash different from mine are necessarily nearer the truth in their estimate of the man simply because their judgment is less refracted by the bias love is supposed to induce For love may have many limitations, but it has this supreme compensation that it endows one with an insight which no other gift of the human mind can command I am not talking here of the helpless attachment which is generally blind For my experience tells me that love which evokes the best in our nature can never be blind The reason is that the light that such love sheds shows up relentlessly the limitations of the loved one because this light is keenly alive to imperfections which love must want to abolish I cannot therefore concede that my loving loyalty to Subhash had from the start woven a veil which shut out from my view his failings and lapses, for that is factually untrue Only, I have not spoken about these too loudly because my main object in attempting this pen-portrait is to depict not all that I saw in him but, by and large, what uplifted me, inspired me and helped me to get the better of my own foibles and vacillations

All the same, in order to obviate a serious misunderstanding, I feel I ought to put it on paper that I cannot but look upon his going over to the Axis powers as anything

but a grievous blunder For it is impossible for any sane man to believe that his move was at all calculated to achieve the one dream of his heart Indian independence It is, indeed, a melancholy thought for me still that Subhash could have been so utterly deceived as to believe that a ruthless and unscrupulous power like the Japanese could possibly want to lend him men and money to help India except with the ulterior motive of grabbing their "pound of flesh!" Here it is difficult for a man of common sense not to subscribe to Panditji's view that, had India been invaded by an army of no matter what extraction, the very fact of the Japanese being behind it should have made it suspect and consequently every Indian must fight such an army Fortunately, India has been spared the horrors of such an invasion and, what is more heartening still, out of evil good has come By 'good' I do not mean a debatable abstraction I only mean that Subhash's suddenly amplified figure, added to the romance of an Indian National Army marching, singing, to Delhi, galvanised a frustrated nation out of its torpor and substantially damaged the insulation of the Indian army from the magnetic currents of popular enthusiasm for immediate independence This all-too-sudden awakening of the Indian fitghing forces became so pronounced and widespread that even Panditji who had had deep misgivings about the I N A of Netaji had to admit in his historic speech the other day (15-3-46) that "Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Mahrattas, politicians or civil servants—among all of them the conception of nationalism has been growing stronger and today I think that the national idea has spread right through, not the least perhaps among some of those soldiers who have done such wonderful service in the war" Of course it is obvious that if the British

have turned so sympathetic overnight to the justice of our demand behind the "national idea," it is not so much because these soldiers did "such wonderful service in the war" as because they might do some still more surprising disservice in peace But be that as it may, it is undeniable that this unexpected *volte face* on the part of our obliging rulers cannot but be of good augury—the more reason why we should agree now with Panditji that it would have been, indeed, a dark day for us if the British in India had been displaced by the I N A under the thumb of the Japanese For after their treatment of China, Korea and others under them,* nobody but a blind man could fail to see what a disaster would have overtaken India If Subhash had succeeded in his rash project Nippon would then have kept India safe and groaning under its octopus tentacles aided perhaps by

* A famous patriotic friend of mine told me in North India a few months ago that it was such a pity that the Japanese and the I N A should have lost the battle of Imphal because if they hadn't we would have surely become free Indians with the Japanese for our loyal allies His view was that the Japanese could be depended upon, as Asiatics to behave with us in a brotherly way I tried vainly to argue that the Japanese conduct had never been conspicuous so far by fraternal gallantry to non-Japanese races whether in the East or West He dismissed it all as British propaganda I wonder if the account published since of the Japanese treatment of Malaya labourers who built for them the Burma-Siam "Death Railway" is going to make any impression on my large-hearted friend One has only to read the dismal description of T G Narayan (a correspondent of the *Hindu* of Madras and consequently not an agent of the British propagandists) who writes "Out of a lakh of labourers who had been dragooned by the Japanese, an estimated 45,000 Indians perished building the railway, not due to lack of food so much as due to lack of medicines, doctors, shelter and the heavy toil This constitutes perhaps the blackest chapter in the history of Japanese rule over Indians in South East Asia" (The *Hindu*, dated 23-3-46, dak edition) I would not have laboured this point had I not found this amazing belief obtaining even among large sections of intelligent Indians that Japan, because of our common Asiatic origin, would have treated Indians much better than the British have

Germany any then, for decades to come, we should be exploited and enslaved in a way compared with which our present enslavement would feel like a nursery mimicry of cheerful servitude

Now, Subhash could never be blind to this extent He had never been one to cherish ill-will against any race (though he sometimes did feel embittered against certain groups, like the Congress High Command, for example) What then, it may well be asked, could be the explanation of his decision to cast in his lot with imperialist Japan? I think what happened must have been something like this

I have said that Subhash had always been rather impatient by nature, and impulsive to boot Consequently he had been growing restive his peacelessness getting more and more intolerable as days, months and years wheeled headlessly by Nor was the load of oppressiveness lightened by his declining health Then came his rustication by the Congress High Command, which he took bitterly to heart But as he was too proud to admit defeat he impetuously organised the luckless Forward Bloc only to discover—soon enough—that he had hastily taken upon himself a burden which was more than he could carry in the teeth of the organised Congress opposition And last, though by no means least, came an emotional frustration that served perhaps as the last straw

But tragedies, as the poet has said, come in battalions He was arrested again for having started the Forward Bloc The prospect of the same inactive and intolerable life again in prison all but maddened him till, towards the end of 1940, he started the hunger-strike The authorities released him But yet another trial impended on January 26, 1941, and he knew well what the verdict was go-

ing to be Then he decided, at a venture, to circumvent fate by fleeing his country From the account recently published by Uttamchand, his host in Kabul, it is already possible to have a fairly accurate picture of his mental outlook in 1941, and one cannot but be materially relieved to learn that his original plan had been to go to Russia, and not to the Axis powers not that he disliked Communism less but that he disliked Fascism more, if I may alter a famous passage * But it appears that there had been some bungling somewere For when he had reached Kabul according to schedule, he was surprised to learn that his Russian friends were no longer over-eager to have him in Moscow Then, as he had already burnt his boat beyond recall, he had nothing for it but to make straight for Berlin Here is what Uttamchand has to tell us (The *Indian Express*, 21-3-46)

> For forty-five days Bose Babu was with me and not once during this period did I hear one good word for the Axis from his lips He hated them as much as the British In Berlin he must have made another attempt to get to Russia through the Russian Embassy But the declaration of the Russo-German War must have finally dashed his hopes of reaching Russia He reached Berlin on March 28, 1941 and on June 22 the Russo-German war broke out

I have entered into such dry details because these constitute valuable evidence in favour of my contention that Subhash could never have had any Fascist leanings even though, by a conspiracy of accidents, he was driven by fate to seek the aid of Japan I am not pleading that he was the fate's puppet as many another is But I do

*" *Not that I love Caesar less but that I love Rome more* "— Shakespeare

maintain that it is possible to be led by a single false step into an eddy from which it becomes impossible to be rescued All our movements are not reversible In any event, it is always more paying to understand people than to judge them As Sri Aurobindo wrote to me once

> Human beings are much less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists, and dramatists make them and I look rather to see what forces drove them than what the man himself may have seemed by inference to have intended or purposed Our inferences are often wrong and even when they are right touch only the surface of things

So, Subhash was a victim of a conspiracy of forces which, by exploiting his heart-sickness, induced him to seek a kind of catharsis through adventure I do not suggest that his decision had been right, for I cannot but think that he should have remained here and faced the music—as Panditji and others did—rather than shake hands with the contaminating Fascists But a sense of loneliness is a cross hard to bear even for the stoutest loins and, unless and until one learns the supreme wisdom of submission to a Guiding Wisdom overarching the shipwreck of human calculations, one can never be too sure of one's gambits So he made a *faux pas* at a very critical moment and then the wheel of Karma saw to the rest

All this I say neither to judge him, still less to plead for him My reminiscences are chiefly inspired by a twofold desire first, to pay homage to the man he was at his most authentic, and secondly, to help people understand his predicament when, alas, he stumbled through a sense of phantom strength, lured by phantom laurels

Perhaps I should not have used a purple word like

'phantom' It reeks too much of our traditional *Maya-vad,* illusionism But after all, in life, when we repeatedly chase a form only to clasp a shadow, can one resist the word which so graphically portrays an experience of Man from the dawn of his spiritual consciousness? Furthermore, have we not, from time immemorial, glimpsed a Reality (though only a handful attained it so far) beside whose boon of fulfilment the puny joys of our world of fact seem infantile if not pitiful? When one takes stock of these two dateless perceptions of humanity, isn't one reminded of the unsurpassed mystics of the *Upnishad* who said

Tadeva Brahma twam viddhi nedam yadidam upasate "Know that for the Brahman and not this which men cherish here"

The mystic in Subhash did not take long to discover this on his own For all his optimistic make-believes could not reconcile him to the stark staring penury which faced him after he had served his country for full sixteen years—risking his life, staking his all, in fact, counting no cost to achieve emancipation from a soul-blasting, alien serfdom Nevertheless, the net recognition of those who mattered, the Congress High Command, was meted out to him in the form of his total expulsion from the country's one and only political organisation It was then that he came to realise with a rude shock that things were not nearly as thrilling as they had seemed to his youthful idealism when he had resigned his I C S post and plunged into politics under his guru Das, vowed to stake his all for his country he had come to deify on his heart's altar But, gradually, alas, in the school of bitter experience and frustration i began to dawn on him that to expect to be understood

by one's collegues in politics was as rational as to expect skeletons to behave like flesh and blood

I am not overstating my case For I have seen him first wince, then grieve and brood and, lastly grow blase under the unjust humiliation he had to undergo only because he had the courage of his conviction and said openly that he did not believe in the cult of non-violence He was ousted by Gandhiji—so he felt—because he had spoken his mind and said about non-violence what many another in the Gandhiite camp thought and felt, like Panditji or Abul Kalam Azad or Patel * The brute fact was that he just did t know how to play his cards for which offence (so he complained many a time to me) he had been unfairly treated as a rebel beyond redemption And what wounded him to the soul was the stark fact that even his friends whom he had hailed as comrades-in-arms could, in a body let him down in his hour of need and read in his burning aspiration to serve his country but an unconfessed lust for personal power † 'This is the most unkindest cut of all, he said once to me with a bitter smile, quoting Shakespeare I could, see that he felt so deeply hurt because he was extremely sensitive by nature But not he, so, I did my poor best, trying to heal his hurt, by reminding him of

* Maulana Abul Kalam Azad writes in his autobiography, *India Wins Freedom*, that he and many another among Gandhiji's adherents had only accepted his cult of non-violence as a policy and not as a principle

† When Subhash had inaugurated his Indian National Army abroad, somebody felicitated his dying mother in Calcutta on her status of the Queen Mother of the would-be King of India She admonished him, scandalised "Never say such a thing ! I never wish, even in my dreams, that my Subhash be made a King I see him always as a servant of his country " (From a famous article on Subhash by the venerable Pundit Asoknath Shastri in *Parag Yuga Jayanti*)

his early spiritual aspiration for self-perfection But then this was essentially a ' mystic ideal ' which he had " outgrown, " he said

But he said this to hide a deep pain with a bravado And it wasn't just a pain but a grievance that rankled as against a cruel injustice Some of his critics said that he ought to have willingly submitted to Congress discipline It was not discipline that he minded But he was asked to eat humble pie and beg the High Command to forgive him, when the boot was on the other leg, that is, the Congress should have come down to meet him half-way This was not his view alone but Poet Tagore's as well Disunity among our workers was disastrous, he said again and again, and it was because he felt it was hard on Subhash that he went out of his way to appeal to Gandhiji

" Owing to gravely critical situation all over India, " the Poet wired, " I would urge Congress Working Committee immediately to remove the ban against Subhas and invite his cordial co-operation in the supreme interests of National unity "

But Gandhiji was implacable and wired back " Your wire was considered by the Working Committee With the knowledge they have they are unable to lift the ban My personal opinion is that you should advise Subhash Babu to submit to discipline if the ban is to be removed Hope you are well "

Subhash could not believe that Gandhiji could be so hard and relentless as to turn down the Poet's request, for a false prestige But a hardening of the heart on one side—following the law of action and reaction—always leads to similar heardening of heart on the other side, which is what happened once again in December

1940 Let me quote a report hereanent ' While convalescing after his release from detention following a hunger-strike, Netaji was asked to comment on a telegram received by a friend from Mahatma Gandhi on the question of withdrawal of disciplinary measures against the Bose brothers in order to effect unity in Congress ranks "

'Gandhiji's telegram was ' Wardhaganj, 28 11 40 REGRET INABILITY EVEN UNWILLINGNESS TO INTERFERE NOTWITHSTANDING MY REGARD AND FRIENDSHIP FOR THE BROTHERS FEEL BANS CANNOT BE LIFTED WITHOUT THEIR APOLOGISING FOR INDISCIPLINE "

Netaji's comment was as follows

At school I once read a poem on William Tell, the greatest hero of Switzerland

My knee shall bend, he calmly said,
To God and God alone,
My life is in the Austrians' hands,
My conscience is my own

I am not aware of any wrong that I have committed in my political career Consequently my reply to the Mahatma will be on the above lines with a few verbal changes

I knew full well how he had for long chafed against the injustice which was assuredly one of the causes not only of his political frustration, but did affect his health as well But what on earth could I do in this instance except feel immensely sorry for him ? My heart ached for him as never before His utter loneliness amounting to a sense of dereliction haunted me and I

* *Crossroads,* Netaji Research Bureau, p 346

did implore him to leave this futile gamble with the dice loaded heavily against him, a gamble that had baulked him cruelly of his victory when it seemed almost within his reach after having been re-elected as the President of the Congress I could see how he had lost and why—because he had counted his chickens before they were hatched Only, alas, the crux of the trouble is that although, when human passions stemming from the clash of egos are dormant, this may, indeed, seem obvious enough to tranquil vision, yet when they are suffered to rise, they do bedevil the atmosphere with their milling sprays for the right vision to have a chance At all events, that is what has happened again and again in history to all robust activists, especially in the field of politics where our turbid vital nature has perhaps the freest play An inescapable consequence of this was that Subhash felt a growing disharmony and restlessness because life, at every turn, insisted on giving him the opposite of what he had tapped it for, till it became so intolerable that he sought some solace through a romantic cum-emotional release but there too he failed—which was, I repeat, the last straw Otherwise I do not think he would have even dreamed of going over to the Axis powers for help in order to wrest phantom laurels from the reluctant hands of Destiny It is difficult not to be impressed by an indomitable will-power, however misdirected—especially when we learn from the highest wisdom, namely the mystic, that even going wrong is exploited by the Great Manoeuvrer to subserve a Divine Purpose How this applies to Subhash's political blunders is too self-evident to need commentary So, I would only add that the miracle was achieved by his unbending will-power and faith in

idealism which, to the likes of us, often seemed too mythical to be true I still remember how his face glowed when, with his youthful blood a-tingle, he would recite Shakespeare's

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars
But in ourselves, that we are underlings

Even on the brink of seventy, my heart warms up just as of old when I feel that here Subhash was not mistaken, since he had never been an underling but a master-builder all his life, and, let us add, a born mystic I shall never forget another memorable night nearly fifty years ago, when he first revealed to me this his deepest persuasion Fortunately, I had kept a record of it in my diary

THIRTY

It was in 1921 in the house of Dr Dharamvir in Lancashire We often talked far into the night with a glow of heart that only youth can command Sitting before the crackling fire, we fell to discussing the portents of the Labour Party in England and Communism in Russia I may say, in those days I used to be an ardent believer in the gospel of Marx and was all but convinced that the Millennium of the visionary could never come in any other—that is, less sanguinary—way

' When Labour comes into power in England, it's surely going to be great, don t you think?" I said, alas, too fervently

Subhash sniffed " In what way ?"

I was deflated

" Well," I stammered, " I—I mean it will be easier

for us to get our asking, of course, what else?"

"In India?" he said "Don't you believe it"

There was a hint of mordancy in his tone which worked me up I said "But why not? Aren't the exploited and the disinherited of all races one?"

He fixed on me his keen gaze of scrutiny

"Or, without beating about the bush, the dictatorship of the Proletariat, what?" But before I could think of a more sonorous slogan he waved me aside

"I would sooner believe in the tale of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp"

I was stung "But Subhash—"

He had risen and was standing with his back to the mantelpiece

"Listen Dilip," he said incisively "Those of us who still fondly believe that India is going to win her independence by raising vast echoes to such nostrums of alien countries are blowing hope-bubbles of illusion They don t know what they are talking about"

"In other words, things that are happening outside are not going to influence our destiny?"

"I won't go so far I only meant that others can't work for our salvation and, what is more to the point, they won't"

"May I know why?"

"For the obvious reason that nobody helps another disinterestedly—not *in* politics Recall Mirzafar * Didn't he believe, as fondly as you believe in English Labour or

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* He used often to quote the Bengali metaphor, *khal kete kumir ana*—that is, literally, digging a canal to invite an alligator from a river His view on this question was so categoric that I cannot but feel that he must have had deep qualms of conscience about his unhappy alliance with the Japanese He was never tired of indicting Mirzafar

Russian Communists, that Clive would help him on to his throne and then gallantly buttress him with the fealty of an obedient vassal? No Dilip, Sri Aurobindo was perfectly right when he said in the Swadeshi days that no outsider would help India If we ourselves can't win our freedom none will come to our rescue. Remember Hamlet 'Never a borrower nor a lender be' That should be our guiding motto in our dealings with parties and politicians outside "

I bridled "It's easier said than done,' I said ' But the fact remains that we, Indians, are too disorganised and at odds with one another to be able to act effectively in concert in order to win our freedom '

He only smiled and said "But that is just the reason why we should take a leaf out of their book and learn to organise ourselves"

I held his eyes but not knowing how to meet this said, rather tamely "And then?"

Subhash looked intently at my face and gave a half-smile The next moment his eyes looked far away, all too suddenly, as was his wont, when dream overtook him unawares "And then " he paused and murmured "Then—*Revolution*"

My heart leapt up For I had never yet run across a revolutionary in my life But I felt ashamed of my nervousness and forced a smile to my lips

"But now," I said, trying in vain to be cool as cucumber, "who is it that favours importing Russian ideas into India?"

"Man alive!" Subhash gasped "Have you never heard of such a thing as the Partition of Bengal and *Ananda Math* and Aurobindo Ghosh? Russia! Her re-

lutionary movement at the dawn of this century was the first real movement, real in the sense that it gave our supine prostrate people the first hint about the reality of their own, unaided strength It was the first movement that created a nucleus of national consciousness, the consciousness that not only have we got the strength in us to struggle against a vastly superior organised power but —how shall I express it—it it sort of convinced us that unless we learnt to be the architects of our destiny others were hardly likely to stir a finger to help the orphans History's verdit is that a nation gets the government it deserves "

I felt infected by the glow of his hot faith while he thus declaimed But when he had finished I felt again the cold fogs of doubt infilterating from outside

"Excuse me, Subhash," I said after a pause, "but do you really mean to say that the way to deserve freedom lies through you know what I mean?"

He laughed "Why are you so scared of the word which begins with R?"

It isn't quite. Revolution I have in mind It is terrorism with all its ugly atmosphere of " I broke down again

"Dear dear, Dilip! As if life was a procession of roses and waterfalls and rainbows and moon-beams I wish it were But we, earthlings, are not all artists, Dilip, we have to reckon with hard reality—weekly, daily, hourly reality I admit it is regrettable, even ugly, if you will—though it has also a terrible beauty of its own, but may be that Beauty does not unveil her face except to her devotees but what would you have? Even Lord Krishna had to devise stratagems when he found the enemy could not be circumvented otherwise"

"But you forget Krishna presided over a regular army We have only tides of patriotic emotion Fine tides to look at, I grant—but only when they surge ahead But then—when they recede?"

Subhash held my eyes

"Did you ever live beside a river?"

'No Why?"

"Because I happen to know, having passed my childhood days in Cuttack It is very curious though—for you have given a simile which spells your own ruin For the tides recede only to surge back again, especially in the rains, with mounting force Day after day I would watch on in curiosity They strike the solid banks for some time at flood-tide but, it seems, only to troop away—shame-faced, defeated After a time they appear again and hurtle with a stronger impetus This play of rising and subsiding is repeated, the assaulting continues, and the banks, their enemies, get weaker and weaker, imperceptibly—till the fateful day when chunks of them fall plop into the swirling, eddying tides and the battle is won where there was a reign of solid land gurgle along radiant, triumphant crests You take it from me Dilip, that all this isn't mere talk It may seem rather quiet now, but it's only the lull before the storm"

"You mean things are being hatched?"

"Of course Only this time the birds will not be let off till they are full-fledged And then there will be such music at the new dawn—won't your artist heart love to lead that chorus?"

His face flushed and looked almost diaphanous in the fire-light I can recapture even the twitches round his firm lips My heart beat nineteen to the dozen

"But let's come down to earth, O artist," he smiled. 'Remember the *Bible* for it won't be only choral choirs of course 'there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' as well"

My heart-beats became unruly

"But I mean are you sure, Subhash?"

"Sure? What do you mean? I know the people or at any rate, some of them And I would have joined them too But frankly, I didn't at the time feel that I could go the whole hog I mean" He paused and there was again that fly-away look in his eyes when he said, somewhat sadly "Who knows we may have to wait yet awhile till till the time is ripe"

I sat like one petrified He darted a sudden glance of sympathy for my plight and laughed "But for this to have been conceivable, Dilip, those stalwarts of the Swadeshi days just had to be And you call them failures? Man alive, can't you imagine the beauty of it all, the appalling beauty of that courage—of an infant organisation of a tiny handful—which dared to throw the gauntlet to the mighty might of the roaring British lion—O Dilip, it sounds too romantic to be true and yet too too real to be discredited"

THIRTY-ONE

Years later, when, during the war, I heard rumours about Subhash Chandra Bose's organising the Indian National Army in Burma, I recalled the memorable night in Lancashire I visualised his hard-tender face glowing in the amber light of an English fire-side, grim with determination yet mellow with love and ardour, the like of

which I have seldom seen in my life of varied experience. Often have the unruly breezes of my imagination wafted to my ears two of his favourite mottos Rabindranath's (which I have already quoted)

Life and death wait upon my feet like slaves
And my mind no dark misgiving ever depraves

and Danton's

Pour les vaincre, il nous faut de l'audace
Encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace

And it was borne in upon me that he was made of the stuff of dreams and fiery aspirations which only nomads of a light beyond the human ken can seek, aspirants who are fain to sing *a la* Chesterton, even when they are defeated by the fates

It is something to have smelt the mystic rose,
Although it break aud leave the thorny ıods
It is something to have hungered once as those
Have hungered who have ate the bread of gods.

I know this is likely to be dismissed as mere rhetoric by those who have never contacted his being of flame and so cannot help but scoff at mystic faith These will simply laugh and call my reading tendencious "Subhash was an ardent revolutionary," they will contend, "but a mystic *a la* Chesterton? What arrant nonsense! He was a great patriot, a fine organiser, a man who could play for big stakes and what not but. " and so on

But as the years glided by, I learnt at the feet of the wisest Master I have known that not only is the authentic revolutionary a true nursling of mysticism, but when such a child of fire comes of age he can reach

the zenith of his stature in the far skies of mysticism alone, The summit vision may not accrue to him in one life (did not the Lord tell Arjun in the *Gita* that he had been born again and again on earth though he, Arjun, did not know this?), but once the seeds of the revolutionary ardour are sown in the heart's blood, the trees of dream must grow ever on ceaselessly till they touch the starland of the mystics who have been on earth the greatest revolutionaries man has ever known That is why they have been in all ages and in all climes the most misunderstood as well as the most persecuted handful on earth Misunderstood because they always question our little dogmas, and persecuted because we dread nothing as the call to stake our lesser loves for the highest Subhash's character which I had the privilege to be allowed to study at close range has convinced me anew of the truth of an early perception of mine of a fundamental kinship between revolutionary ardour and mystic fervour And it is because this is unquestionnably true that he oscillated so often between the call of the revolution of consciousness through a spiritual aspiration and that of adventure deep into the heart of the Unknown through organised insurrection against heartless exploitation I cannot but think—through I know many will decline to undersign my reading—that Subhash would have risen to far greater heights of self-fulfilment if he had harked to the former call But since, evidently, he couldn't—or rather, didn't—choose to respond to the profoundest call of his soul, he had to shape in the way he did—in this life As to why one elects to tread the path of a lesser love when the higher lies open before one will perhaps remain a mystery to man till he finally arrives, but whatever be the ultimate

solution to this anguished query of the self-haunted soul, this much is certain—to quote a quatrain of one of Subhash's most beloved poets, the mystic A E of Ireland

Though the crushed jewels drop and fade
The Artist's labour will not cease
And of the ruins shall be made
Some yet more lovely masterpiece

APPENDIX I

NETAJI'S CREDO

Do you want the fragrance of the full-blown rose ? If so, you must accept the thorns Dou you want the sweetness of the smiling dawn ? If so, you must live through the dark hours of the night Do you want the joy of liberty and the solace of freedom ? If so, you must pay the price And the price of liberty is suffering and sacrifice

Bombay — Subhash Chandra Bose

31-12-31

To — Cuttack,

Shri Sarat Chandra Bose — January 1, 1913

Dear brother,

A brighter future is India's destiny God is ever good He is leading us towards our only goal He is the magnet round which all things revolve and to which all creation inevitably moves We must move—the road may be dangerous and stony—the journey may be a laboured one, but we must march We must ultimately lose ourselves in Him The day may be far off, but it must come Don't we feel that He is pulling us towards Him with magnetic force ? I think we do Has He not spread Nature's charms around us only to remind us of His existence ? Has He not bidden the stars to speak for Him and the infinite sky to teach man that He is infinite ? Has He not instilled love in our hearts, to remind us of the love He bears towards us ?

(*An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 137)

APPENDIX II

LEADER OE THE NATION

By

Rabindranath Tagore

Subhash Chandra, I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political *Sadhana* In that uncertain twilight there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are now Today you are revealed in the pure light of midday sun which does not admit of apprehensions You have come to absorb varied experiences during these years Today you bring your matured mind and irrepressible vitality to bear upon the work at hand Your strength has sorely been taxed by imprisonment, banishment and disease, but, rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies—enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory

Let it be your untiring mission to claim of your countrymen the resoluteness, the unyielding will to live and to conquer, strengthened by the inspiration of your own life Let Bengal affirm in one united voice that her deliverer's seat is ready spread for you May she offer you honour worthy of a leader by retaining her self-respect in trials as well as triumphs

The born leaders of men are never alone and they never belong to the fugitive moment The eternal message of the sunrise of the future they carry in their own lives

As I feel that you have come with an errand to usher in a new light of hope in your motherland, I ask you to take up the task of the leader of Bengal and ask my countrymen to make it true

Long ago, at a meeting, I addressed my message to the Leader of Bengal who was yet to seek After a

lapse of many years, I am addressing at this meeting one who has come in to the full light of recognition I may not join him in the fight that is to come I can only bless him and take my leave knowing that he has made his country's burden of sorrow his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country's freedom

May, 1939

APPENDIX III

Villeneuve (Vaud), Villa Olga,
February 22, 1935

Dear Mr Subhas C Bose,

I duly received your volume "The Indian Struggle 1920-34", which you were good enough to send me I thank you for it and congratulate on it heartily So interesting seemed the book to us that I ordered another copy so that my wife and sister should have one each It is an indispensable work for the history of the Indian Movement In it you show the best qualities of the historian lucidity and high equity of mind Rarely it happens that a man of action as you are is apt to judge without party spirit

We, the men of thought, must each of us fight against and the temptation, that befalls us in moments of fatigue unsettledness, of repairing to a world beyond the battle called either God, or Art, or independence of Spirit, or those distant regions of the mystic soul But fight we must, our duty lies on this side of the ocean, on the battle-ground of men .

I sincerely wish that your health will speedily recover for the good of India that is in need of you and I beg you to believe in my cordial sympathy

Romain Rolland

APPENDIX IV

TWO POEMS NETAJI LOVED

George Russell (A E)

Your eyes are filled with tender light
For those whose eyes are dim with tears
They see your brow is crowned and bright,
But not its ring of wounding spears

Chesterton

It is something to have wept as we have wept
It is something to have done as we have done,
It is something to have watched when all men slept,
And seen the stars which never see the sun

It is something to have smelt the mystic rose,
Although it break and leave the thorny rods,
It is something to have hungered once as those
Must hunger who have ate the bread of gods

To have known the things that from the weak are furled,
Perilous ancient passions, strange and high,
It is someting to be wiser than the world,
It is something to be older than the sky

TWO SONGS NETAJI LOVED

Land of Dream

O my India !—O my mother !—O my nursery, nurse and home !
Why dishevelled are thy locks and dim thine eyes with tears of gloom ?
Why art thou in rags—O why has dust claimed one who's born divine ?
When four hundred million children call thee, singing: " Mother mine !"

This thy land saw Buddha's soul's high sunrise like divinity
Half the world still bring him homage in adoring ecstasy!
Ashoka lit his torch of love from hoary peaks to the far blue deep,
How canst thou, their mother, sigh in penury?—How canst thou weep?
Once thy lightning legions conquered kings and continents untold,
Thy sentinel fleet the oceans scoured with storm-defiant sails of gold,
Thy sons in Tibet, China and Japan built colonies of Light,
How canst thou, their mighty mother, lie in dust—subdued by Night?
Here arose in deathless cadence Chaitanya's sweet canticles
Shankar wrote philosophy and Vyas thrilled us with Krishna's tales
Pratap, the lion-hearted, battled—and 'twas thy name inspired them all,
O how blood in our veins tingles when their great deeds we recall!
Though thy sinless sun's no more and we grope blind in darkness' sway,
Clouds will pass and round thy brow a deeper lustre come to stay
No clods are we, thy fire's own scions, relume we must thy hallowed Gleam,
O my Goddess, All-in-all, my Heaven of heavens, my Land of dream!

Chorus

There's no sorrow and there's no shame, no coward truce with tyrant Fate,
When four hundred million voices sing thy name inviolate!

(Translated from Dwijendralal Roy's famous poem *Amar Desh*, by Dilip Kumar Roy)

Home of Bliss

This fruitful earth so richly hued,
With gold and grain and blooms endued,
Still holds within a land surpassing
all others' glow and gleam
Girdled by irised memories,
woven of halcyon dream

Where else will sun and moon and star
So sparkle and beckon from afar ?
Where else will lightning play with clouds
like cherubim of the sky ?
Where else do we wake to such carols of birds
and sleep to their lullaby ?

Where else will trees so flare with flowers,
And bulbuls sing in myriad bowers ?
Where else do choral bees so hum,
dancing on the rose's breast ?—
And, drinking her honey deep-embosomed
drowse in her nectar-nest ?

Where else will purl such cooling rills ?
Stand sentinels the mystic hills ?
Where else are meadows lost in trance
on the marge of the marvel blue ?
Where else do seas of corn-blades ripple
when murmuring breezes woo ?

Where else will brother's and mother's love
Bend like the greeting heavens above ?
O Mother mine ! – thy sacred feet
I fold to my heart and kiss,
I am born, thrice-blest, to thy home of beauty
may I die in that home of bliss

Chorus

You will never find in the world below
a land like our land of birth
Queen of the continents is she,
supremely fair on earth

(Translated from Dwijendralal's famous song *Amar Janmabhumi*, by Dilip Kumar Roy)

APPENDIX V

Mandalay Central Jail,
2-5-1925

My dear Dilip,

I was delighted to receive your letter dated, 24-3-25 It did't have to reach me this time through a process of "double distillation"—to use your locution, which makes me feel happier still

Your letter has touched such a tender chord in my heart that it is not easy for me to give an adequate reply by way of reciprocation Besides, all I write has to pass through the censor's hands, which, too, acts as a damper For none cares to see the deepest articulation of his heart published in the light of day open to the scrutiny of all and sundry So, much of what I have been thinking and feeling today behind the stone walls and prison-bars must remain unspoken for ever

It is quite natural for a man of your susceptibilities to feel outraged that so many should be retained in jail on an unknown charge But since accept it we must as a fact, we might as well look into the matter from a spiritual standpoint

I cannot say that I would like to stay in a jail, for that would be unadulterated humbug The whole atmosphere inside a jail tends, if anything, to pervert and dehumanise a human being , and I believe this must be true of all jails, more or less I think the majority of convicts undergo a moral deterioration while in prison After having been the guest of so many jails I must confess my eyes have been opened to the urgent need of a radical reform of prison-life and in future I will feel obligated to help bring about such a reform Indian jail regulations are a bad imitation of a bad model —the British, even as the university of Calcutta is a bad imitation of London

What is most urgently called for is a new outlook based on sympathy for the convict His wrong impulses must be regarded as symptomatic of a psychological derangement and remedies should be devised

accordingly The penalising mood which may well be assumed to be the inspiration of jail prescriptions has to give place to a new orientation guided by flair for true reform

I do not think I could have looked upon a convict with the authentic eye of sympathy had I not lived personally as a prisoner And I have not the least doubt that the production of our artists and litterateurs, generally, would stand to gain in ever so many ways could they win to some new experience of the prsion-life We do not perhaps realise the magnitude of the debt owed by Kazi Nazrul Islam's verse to the living experience he had of jails

When I pause to reflect calmly, I feel the stirring of a certitude within that some Vast Purpose is at work in the core of our fevers and frustrations Could only this faith preside over every movement of our conscious life would't our suffering lose its poignancy and bring us face to face with the ideal bliss even in a dungeon? But that is not possible yet, generally speaking Which is why this duel must go on unremittingly between the soul and the body

Usually a kind of philosophic mood instils strength into our hearts in prison surroundings In any event, I have taken my station there and what little I have read of philosophy superadded to my conception of life in general has stood me rather in good stead here If a man can find sufficient food for contemplation then his incarceration need hardly hurt him much unless of course his health desert him But our suffering is not merely spiritual—there is the rub—the body too has a say in the business, so that even when the spirit was willing the flesh might be weak

Lokamanya Thilak wrote out his commentary on the *Gita* while in prison I can say with certainty that he spent his days in mental happiness But, withal, his premature death was as certainly attributable to his six years' detention in Mandalay Jail

But the enforced solitude in which a detenu passes his days gives him an opportunity to think down

into the ultimate problems of life In any event, I can claim this for myself that many of the most tangled questions which whirl like eddies in our individual and collective life are edging gradually to the estuary of a solution The things I could only puzzle out feebly, or the views I could only offer tentatively in days gone by, are crystallising out more and more presentably from day to day It is for this reason, if for no other, that I feel I will be spiritually a gainer through my imprisonment

You have given my detention the name of martyrdom This only testifies to the sympathy native to your character as also to your nobility of heart But since I have some sense of humor and proportion—I hope so, anyway—I can hardly arrogate to myself to martyr's high title Against hauteur and conceit I want to be sleeplessly vigilant How far I have achieved this it is for my friends to judge At all events, martyrdom can only be an ideal so far as I am concerned

I have felt that the greatest tragedy for a convict who has to spend long years in prison is that old age creeps upon him unawares He should therefore be specially on his guard You cannot imagine how a fellow gets prematurely worn-out in body and in mind while serving a long sentence Doubtlessly a variety of causes are responsible for this lack of good food, exercise and life's amenities, segragating, a sense of cramped subordination, dearth of friends, and last, though by no means least, absence of music There are some gaps which a man may fill from within, but there are others which can be only filled from without To be denied these is not a little responsible for ageing before one's time In the Alipore Jail musical entertainments are provided every week for the European prisoners, not so here, for the likes of us

I should not omit to mention that to a detenu the goodwill and sympathy of his friends and relations and the general public can, indeed, be a source of sustenance Although the influence of such imponderables is a subtle and subterranean one, yet when I scan myself I

realise how it is not a whit the less real for all that There is here a difference between the hardness of lot of a political prisoner and a common convict The former is sure of his welcome back into the fold of society Not so the latter To me such a state of affairs seems anything but satisfactory Why shouldn't a civilised community feel for these unhappy men?

I could go on filling pages registering my thoughts and experiences of prison-life But after all a letter must come to a terminus some time If I had a surplus of initiative left I might have written a whole book on Indian Jails But just at present I lack the strength adequate to such a task

I am inclined to think that the suffering in jail-life is less physical than mental When the blows dealt, of insult and humiliation, are not too brutal, the torments of prison-life do not become so hard to bear But lest we forget too readily our outer material existence and conjure up an ideal world of bliss within, thev will deal us these blows to waken us to our bleak and joy-less surroundings

You write you are getting daily a sadder if not a wiser man to contemplate how our earth is soaked by tears of humanity from crust to centre But then these tears are not all of pain and anguish there are drops of compassion and love as well Would you really decline to traverse the shoals of pain and suffering if you knew there were richer tides of bliss waiting? So far as I am concerned I see little warrant for pessimism or despondency On the contrary, I feel, sorrow and suffering should impel us to courage for a higher fulfilment Do you think what you win without pain and struggle has any lasting value?

I received the books you had sent I won't be able to return these as there is a considerable circle of readers here It is hardly necessary to add that more such books will be welcome—yours being a beautiful choice, always

Affectionately yours,

Subhash

APPENDIX VI

Mandalay Central Jail,
25-6-25

My dear Dilip,

After my last letter I have received in all three letters from you so far, dated, May 6, May 15, June 15

I am in receipt also of the parcel of books you sent, with the sole exception of Turgenev's *Smoke* The parcel was opened in the office, so I have asked our Superintendent to look into the matter

I left behind Bertrand Russel's *Prospects of Industrial Civilisation* in Berhampore whence I was transferred her Quite a group of my fellow prisoners were eager about keeping the book But Russell's *Free Thought and Official Propaganda* isn't with me You never sent it, did you?

I thank you, Dilip, for selecting books for me We all hope the work you have started will fare famously, God willing I need hardly tell you that your own writing I will read with the respect it deserves But do see to the get-up of your books, for it should leave nothing to be desired

You can imagine what dominates my thought today I believe there is but one thought in all minds now the death of our great Deshbandhu When I first read the news in print I could hardly credit my eyes But alas, the report is cruely true Ours is indeed an ill-starred nation

The thoughts that are running riot in my mind today must remain unvoiced although sometimes I feel like publishing them if only to get some reprieve But they are too sacred and precious to be shared with strangers —and the Censor is worse than a stranger So I will only say that if for the country the loss is irreparable, for the youth of Bengal it is cataclysmic, appalling

I am desolate with a sense of bereavement For I feel so vividly near to the great departed in the world

of memory that it is impossible for me just now to write something about him analysing his great qualities I hope when the time comes I will be able to give the world some idea of the glimpses I had of him in his unguarded moments as I watched him at close range There must be a good many like me who, though they know a great deal about him, yet do not feel equal to writing about it all lest through vocal praise they diminish the stature of his outstanding nobility

When you say, roundly, that the last residue of pain and sorrow is not suffering, I am at one with you There are certain tragedies in life—like the one mentioned just now—which I cannot acclaim Being neither a sage nor a humbug, I cannot declare that all kinds of affliction are acceptable to me At the same time, it has often made me pause to think that there are a few unfortunates (they may indeed be fortunate for all we know!) who seem to be born as targets for flings of Fate of every description But leaving aside this question of degree I may say that if some must drain to the dregs the cup of sorrow, it were better if they drank the potion in a spirit of self-surrender For even if we admit that such a spirit may not withstand, like a Chinese wall, the assaults of destiny, it must, for all that, greatly heighten our natural powers of fortitude When Russel says there are tragedies which men would be spared if they could, he only speaks for the typical worldling For I believe that a stainless saint—or his polar opposite, the mountebank —will disown such a statement

But I wonder if you are right in holding that those who are neither philosophic nor thoughtful meet in pain nothing but pain For even the unphilosophic (I call them so from the abstract point of view) may have an idealism of their own which they will cherish and love as a thing to be worshipped When these are up against pain and sorrow they derive their courage and hope from their source of adoration Among those who are with me bearing up against the suffering of jail-life, there are some who are neither thoughtful nor philosophic, and yet they affront pain calmly, even like heroes These

may not be philosophic in the common acceptation of the term, but you can hardly class them as aliens to the world of ideas Probably this applies more or less to all who are to activists by temperament, the world over

My eyes have opened not a little through a study of the criminal psychology When I was jailed, in 1922, a convict used to work in our yard as a servant At that time I used to live in the same room with Deshbandhu His heart of tenderness went all out to the fellow, albeit he was on old hand, having had already eight previous convictions to his credit None the less, he left unconsciously drawn towards Deshbandhu till he became exceedingly attached to his master When Deshbandhu was released he asked his devotee to go straight to his house at the expiry of his term, shunning even the shadow of his old comrades in crime The poor wretch acquiesced and, subsequently, was as good as his word You will be surprised to learn that the man who had been a felon all his life has been living in our great leader's house ever since and though he does sometimes revert to his tantrums still, yet roundly, he is today a different man altogether, living a harmless enough life with the rest I have no doubt that he is among those on whom the blow of this bereavement has fallen at its heaviest Some say the greatness of a man were best judged through his little acts, little things On this criterion too Deshbandhu must be adjudged a great soul even if you reckoned without his great service to the country

I have divagated I have not been able yet to answer your letter fully But I shall have to cry halt here if I mean to catch today's mail which I must because I know you will be anxious to have tidings of me More in my next

Ever affectionately yours,

Subhash

APPENDIX VII

Mandalay Jail,
11-9-25

My dear Dilip,

My last letter to you was unfinished and I intended to follow it up with another one the next week But a terrible calamity intervened—which swept us off our feet Even today I do not know where I stand and I am sure the feelings of all are much the same—though in my case there is an irrecoverable personal loss to deepen my misery, as well as a double dose of bondage to heighten my suffering The sense of personal loss may wane with the passage of time, but I am sure that the magnitude of the loss to the public will become more and more manifest as the days roll by So versatile was his talent and so many-sided his activities, that people in different and widely separate spheres will be hard hit by the loss I used to criticise him by saying that he had too many irons in the fire—but creative spirits do not submit to pragmatic or logical limitations and I have no doubt that it was only the fullness of life and realisation that impelled him to attempt reconstruction in so many different spheres of our national life

You all had at least the opportunity of paying your last homage and even now you can find some solace in trying to perpetuate his memory But it has pleased God to drive home into our minds a feeling of utter destitution as a result of confinement in remote Mandalay during such a crisis as this It is only because I am exceedingly optimistic by temperament that I can still maintain my equilibrium It is difficult to find adequate expression when one's feelings are stirred to their depths and I shall therefore pass on to something else

How far have you proceeded with your books? Are they in the press? When do you expect them to be out? Why don't you write a treatise in English (for the benefit of other provinces as well) on the need for the revival and popularising of Indian music?

I wrote to Rudra some time ago conveying my sympathy on his bereavement I have not heard from him in reply yet Do you hear from him?

Could you send us a complete set of the books of your great father? We want to read them over again If you can, you may send them direct to the Superintendent of this Jail along with a letter (containing the names of the books) intimating him about the despatch of the books All our letters have to pass the Calcutta Office but the Superintendent of the Jail is empowered to censor books. So you may save time by sending literature direct to him By the way, have you been able to trace Turgeneiv's *Smoke?* I have been informed by the Calcutta C I D that no such book was sent to them I shall be sorry if the book is really missing

Though the climate of the place does not agree with me, I am feeling happier from day to day Problems which to me were unsolved seem to be nearing solution And I must thank solitude and distance from home for giving me that detached viewpoint which is necessary for the solution of many of our problems If I had been more fit physically, I would have profited more by my enforced exile, but as things stand I still hope to make the most of my stay here Burma is in many respects a wonderful country and my study of Burmese life and civilization is furnishing me with many new ideas Their various shortcomings notwithstanding, I consider the Burmese—like the Chinese—to be considerably advanced from a social point of view

What they do lack most of all is initiative—what Bergson would call "elan vital", the vital impulse to overcome all obstacles and march along the road to progress. They have developed a perfect social democracy—women, by the way, are more powerful here than in any European country—but alas, the enervating climate seems to have robbed them of all initiative Abundance of crops in a sparsely populated country has for centuries past made living easy in Burma—with the inevitable result that slackness of mind and body seems to have taken possession of the Burmese But I feel sure

that once they are able to develop sufficient initiative, here will be no limit to their progress

You probably know that the percentage of literate people in Burma, both among males and females, is more than in any other part of India This is due to the indigenous and wonderfully cheap system of primary education through the agency of the priests In Burma, even today, every boy is supposed to don the yellow robe for a few months, if not for a few years, and to study at the feet of the priests This system has not only an educative and moral value but has a levelling effect as well—since rich and poor are thus brought together There is thus an extensive system of primary education which hardly costs anything

In your last letter you seem to assume that the unphilosophic are doomed to suffer in their confinement This is not wholly true There are people who are inspired by idealism of some kind but who are unphilosophic During the last war innumerable people went through suffering and pain of every kind, who were inspired by love of country but were altogether unphilosophic As long as that idealism is present, I believe a man can brave suffering with equanimity—and even joy Of course one who is philosophically inclined can turn his suffering to a higher purpose, enriching himself thereby But then is it not true that we are all philosophers in embryo and it only requires a touch of suffering to awaken the philosophc inplulse?

I shall stop here for the present and hope that you will send me an early reply With love and good wishes to you and remembrances to all my kind friends

I am,

Ever yours affectionately,

Subhash

APPENDIX VIII

Mandalay Central Jail,
9-10-25

My dear Dilip,

Never think that my vision is narrow or parochial I do, indeed, believe in the "greatest good of the greatest number" But that good I do not equate to the purely material Economists say that all work is either productive or unproductive But the question which of these are really productive gives rise to furious logomachines I for one cannot look upon art and its kindred activities as unproductive, nor despise philosophic contemplation or spiritual quest as futile and pointless I may not be an artist myself—to tell you the truth, I know I am not—but for that it isn't I who am responsible, it is nature or God if you will Of course if you say that I am reaping in this birth what I sowed in my last, then I go to the wall Leaving it at that, the real reason, in a nut-shell, why I did not shape into an artist is I couldn't But this does not mean, mind you, that a layman is debarred even from enjoying art And the amount of training necessary to a proper appreciation of an art isn't, I think hard to acquire for a cultivated person

Do not sigh regretfully that you have been wasting your days on music when, to put it in Shakespeare's language, "the time is out of joint" Flood our whole countryside, my friend, with songs and recapture for life the spontaneous joy we have forfeited He who has no music in his composition, whose heart is dead to music, is unlikely to achieve anything big or great in life Carlyle used to say that he who had no throb of music in his blood was capable of any misdeed Whether this be true or no, I am persuaded that he who cannot respond to music can never scale heights of thought or action We want that the experience of *ananda*—sheer causeless delight—should quicken every drop of our blood, because we only create in the fullness of *ananda* And what is there that can outwell *ananda* like music ?

But we must make the artistic and its kindred joys amenable to the poorest of the poor High research in music will, of necessity, continue in small expert coteries, but simultaneously, music must be dispensed as a spiritual pabulum of the masses Just as the high ideals of art are stultified through lack of adequate research even so, art must wilt when, sundered from the life-soil of the masses, it is made inaccessible to all and sundry I think art joins up with life through folk-music and folk-dance The Western civilization has hewed away this isthmus between the two continents, of art and life, without substituting anything in its place Our *jatra, kathakata, kirtan,** etc survive today almost as relics of the past One shudders to think of the poverty of life that must ensue if our artists and muscians fail to restore the connection between art and life You may remember I told you once how fascinated I had been by the beauty of the *gambhira* music of Maldah In it music is happily blended with dance I do not know of any other province in Bengal where such a happy union has been effected But in Maldah it is sure to die away soon unless, first, new vitality be injected into it and, in the second place, people in other parts of Bengal come forward to take it up You ought to visit the place once if only to give a filip to the folk-music of Bengal I warn you though that *gambhira* has little or no element of complexity or grandeur about it Its salient features are spontaneity and simplicity Our indigenous music and dance of the people still survive, I think, in Maldah alone So those who would revive such folk-art may as well start work from there

From the point of view of folk-music and folk-dance Burma is a marvellous country Pure native dance and music are in full swing here and they cater for tens of thousands, zigzagging deep into the heart of remote vil-

* *Jatra*=folk-dramas played in the open under a *pandal* where there is no stage set the audience and the actors occupying the same level area *Kirtan*=devotional dramatic music where Krishna and Radha figure in the main *Kathakata*=mythological sagas or legends recited by pundits, alternated with songs

lages After having mastered the different idioms of our Indian music you may as well study the Burmese It may not be an evolved art, but its capacity of delighting the illiterate poor has, somehow, appealed to me I am told that their dance, too, is very beautiful Furthermore, its art is not confined to select coteries, because, I imagine, there is no caste system in Burma (As a result art here has infilterated everywhere) And probably also because folk-music and folk-dance have always had a tremendous vogue in this country So the common folk have won to a deeper understanding of beauty than the Indian

I echo all you write about Deshbandhu as also your remark that the innate nobility of a man is revealed more through little private incidents of his life than through his public activities or political achievements caught up in the lime-light In fact I gave him my heart's deep adhesion and reverent love not so much because I happened to be his follower in the arena of politics, as because I had come to know him rather intimately in his private life He had no family, properly speaking, out side that of his colleagues and adherents Once we lived togother in jail for eight months for two months in the same cell, for six in adjacent ones I took refuge at his feet because I came to know him thus through a very close relationship

I subscribe to most of what you write about Sri Aurobindo, if not to all He is a *dhyani* (a contemplative) and, I feel, goes even deeper than Vivekananda, though I have a profound reverence for the latter So I agree with you when you say that one may from time to time—and, on occasion, for a long spell— remain withdrawn in silent contemplation in perfect seclusion But here there is a danger the active side of a man might get atrophied if he remained cut off for too long from the tides of life and society This need not, indeed, apply to a handful of authentic seekers of uncommon genius, but the common run, the majority, ought, I think, to take to action in a spirit of service as the main plank of their *sadhana* For a variety of reasons our nation has been

sliding pauselessly down to the zero line in the sphere of action, so what we badly need today is a double dose of the activist serum, *rajas*

I say ditto to you again when you say that each of us must strive to develop his powers to their fulness Real service is only achieved when we dedicate what is the best in our composition Not till our inner being, our *swadharma*, has fulfilled itself, shall we have won through to our inalienable right, *adhikar*, to what I call real service To put it in the language of Emerson, we must be moulded from within This does not mean that we all have to tread the same path, though it is possible that the same ideal may inspire us all The artist's *sadhana* is not the same as the activist's, no more than the contemplative's *sadhana* is the same as the savant's, though I think, in the last analysis, the ideals of all are one But in the practical field of self-realisation I wouldn't put a round peg in a square hole One who was true to oneself could hardly be false to humanity The nature of each must indicate the clue to the path that is his, the path that leads to his self-amelioration and self-expansion If each of us could fulfil himself following his native capacity and temperament, then a new sunrise would outbreak over the entire life of the nation It is, indeed, possible that a man may have to lead, during a particular phase of his *sadhana**, a life which looks on the surface like selfishness or ego-centricism But while he is passing through that phase he must follow the dictates of his own conscience—not those of public opinion The public shall not judge till the results of the *sadhana* are published Consequently, once you choose to tread the true path of self-unfoldment you may well ignore public opinion So you see we are much less at variance with each other you seem to think

Yours ever affectionately,

Subhash

* *Sadhana*=originally, spiritual discipline, *askesis*, now-a-days has come to mean any disciplined endeavour for a high ideal

Dilip,

I was very glad to receive your letter Subhash's lettet is very beautiful I was delighted to contact through it his heart and intellect All that he has written about art is unexceptionable Artists and connoisseurs build their crystal homes on the summit plateaus of art It is idle to hope that all and sundry will climb up there easily It is because the multi-coloured and multi-savoured clouds confer together on the heights that the plains get the benefit of their fertilising showers It is only in this way that the commonalty join hands with rare spirits which could not be achieved if you dwarfed the heights so that these might always mate with the plains Those who are creators of *rasa* could only take orders from all on pain of shipwreck They can take orders from none other than the Supreme Resident of the heart and, once this is done, when they succeed in fashioning things of beauty for all times, then these must come automatically within the ambit of enjoyment of all To say that all have this right is not to say that all can profit by it here and now—good things are not so cheap as all that The spring-blooms petal, indeed, equally for all, but can one therefore argue that they are appreciated by all and sundry? Can one blame it upon the poor mango-blossoms which open after winter if the majority ignore them? Shall we say to them 'Why couldn't you become gourds'—or "In a poor country it were silly to grow jasmines since there it would be the moral duty of all flowers to yield place to brinjals"? I say may the jasmine wait for ages till the philistine who ignores her today may learn to respond rather than try to change herself overnight into tamarind, disheartened by the disapproval of stern humani-

* *Rasa*=the essenee of things whose nature is to afford delight The word has been translated also as "aesthetic emotion which inspires ecstasy" Originally the word was almost synonymous with *ananda* (e g., *raso vai sah*=' he is the essence of *ananda*, bliss") but such words (*ananda rasa*, *sadhana*, *swadharma*, *samskara*, *bhava*, etc) are untranslatable in the last analysis · the only way to understand them is to enter into the associations that have crystallised round them

tarians If you respect the masses and go on supplying them with things of quality, then by and by, their minds must grow more and more sensitive to the quality Let us appeal to the poet "May you give us only of your very best, without an after-thought' And to the public, should the poet so succeed "May you learn to accept what is of the best" Those who are artists and creators of *rasa* can only own to two distinctions authentic or counterfeit, good or bad they know not how to winnow out the elite's food from the rabble's It is broadcast sonorously that Shakespeare was a poet of the Common Man But is Hamlet the pabulum of the man in the street? I do not know for which type Kalidas wrote his poetry, but he is universally cherished as a poet But there again, may I not humbly ask whether it would not be a penal offence if his *Cloud-Messenger* were to be recited in every village to a gathering of gaping yokels? Had the advocate of Common Man deposed King Vikramaditya and constrained his court-poet Kalidas to compose to order, would the Lord of Eternity have tolerated the doggerel that would have supplanted *Cloud-Messenger* (*Meghadut*)? Should you ask me for a solution to this poser, I would say that Kalidas's *Meghdut* was meant, indeed, for the delectation of the Common Man, but it is part of the presiding elite's obligation to educate him to be able to enjoy such masterpieces Nay, the poet is not duty-bound to strike sparks of cheap assonance in place of his inspired love-lyrics on the specious argument that these will not go down with the Common Man Affectation is reprehensible everywhere, but to contend that whatever tickles all is authentic and what appeals only to a cultivated sensibility is the reverse is to argue like a sophist It is because we have little reverence for the commonalty that in a festival of *rasa* we prescribe for them a cheap repast of curd and fried rice and reserve the delicacies for those we call aristocrats Because we pooh-pooh children, the task of turning out juvenile literature is relegated to blunt literary boors who hold that to ape the infantile lisping is to create literature for infants I res-

pect children and that is why I provide real literature for them when I teach them in my school, to wit, literature meant for everybody's enjoyment Of course I have to take care that they may be able to take in the *rasa* of the literature provided, but I can't admit to having failed here I need hardly have laboured the point to you, but when garrulity ripens into a habit, one seldom knows when to cry halt when discoursing with friends Anyhow, you have delighted me so much by sending me Subhash's letter that for sheer gratefulness I had to write at such an unconscionable length notwithstanding a gash I made in my first finger a little while ago *

Yours affectionately,

Rabindranath Tagore

APPENDIX IX

Netaji's spectacular resignation from the I C S swiftly fired the imagination of the Indian students in England, so much so that some verbose patriot-fanciers in London sent him a framed address A student, burning to paint the town red and aspiring to outblaze the rest, proposed to me that we lead a procession on horseback, with him at our head, before the Buckingham Palace A third broke out into white-hot poetry and wrote, *a la* Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade* (Subhash was about to tear it off to pieces when I snatched it away from him)

Bullets all round him hiss,
But fall his feet to kiss,
This occasion we never can miss
  To thee, O hero, we bow!
On, on the tyrants to fight!
Behold gone, gone is the night!
Trample on them in delight!
  Hark! calls the new sun-glow!

Subhash used to redden to the roots of his hair whenever his admirers let themselves go like this He used

* Translated by the author from the Poet's original letter written in Bengali

to comment, scathingly, that such "soda-water effervescences" got none anywhere—only staking one's all for the Motherland could deliver the goods But I used to demur (as I have always liked people to enthuse over his great emotions, noble achievements and indomitable courage) "You may brand all such effusions as irrelevant, but great deeds, enthusiastically acclaimed, do create values and traditions Read Plutarch's *Lives* how oratory used to make history in those days"

Subhash would shake his head ruefully and protest vehemently "Emotionalism, even slogan-building, may help, on occasion, but I prefer real solid work, and sacrifice You have known so many Indian students here. Tell me, how many have you met who really burn to stake anything for our country? Ninety-nine per cent of them go abroad to win a degree either to get a good job or to become a lawyer, don't they? Pooh! When such careerists talk of 'bullets' and 'fight to the death' do they not become the laughing-stocks of the whole world?"

Against pseudo-patriots and fire-eaters he used always to inveigh in his strain—emphasising how cheap was all this gush over things that caught the eye He used always to place application—*nishtha*—and solid organising work far above rhetoric and would end up with "To win to freedom is not a joke, Dilip! You remember Rabindranath's lines

Auspicious conchs, friend, never shall announce,
Thy home-coming, nor the tender candle-light
Welcome thee ever at night,
Nor thy heart's darling's passing sweet
Tearful love-lit eyes thee greet
For thee at every bend shall wait and boom
The thunder-clouds when shadows loom
(Gharer mangal shankha nahe tor tare
Nahe re sandhyar dipalok
Nahe preyasir ashru-chokh
Pathe pathe apekschiche kalbaishakhir ashirvad
Shravan ratir bajranad)

In the context of his subsequent lonely death in a foreign land with the name of the Motherland on his lips, his early love for these memorable lines becomes invested with a deeper significance It shows him up as the Leader to be, a man who not only lived what he preached but about whom one may well say with truth that cannot be challenged

No demon night could tame your
Flame-hunger for freedom's bliss,
The lesser loves you spurned for
Your Mother-land s welcome kiss,
With a courage that cowards derided,
But won the homage of all
Who caught a spark from your fiery
Heart that had answered Her call,
You stormed our hovels of slumber
With your mystic bugle of dawn
To awaken us to our birthright,
Singing "We will march on
To the Orient of a New Sunrise
Of inviolate Liberty,
We'll die for India's glory
And live everlastingly"

I wrote this tribute to his memory on his 67th birthday (1963), and I feel sure that those who had known him intimately will endorse my estimate of him whole heartedly as of a man who lived what he preached and that is why he could wean us from our dismal card-houses of slumber In this Reminiscences Shri S A Ayer summed up his speeches in Malaya and Burma In one speech Netaji said to his soldiers

"There can be no halfway house You must all be come freedom-mad None of you dare think in terms of giving only five per cent or ten per cent of your wealth to prosecute this war of India's independence The tens of thousands of men who have come forward to well the liberation army do not bargain by saying that they will shed only five per cent or ten per cent of

their blood on the battle-field Give up your all for India's freedom and become beggars, and if that is not enough, give up your lives too Even that is not too much of a sacrifice Give me your blood and I promise you freedom "*

And how compulsive could be such an exhortation of fire! Shah Nawaz told us one of the most moving stories of heroism, inspired by this speech of Netaji's, especially by the last sentence I have cited What happened was that when Netaji's army returned from Imphal after the sad reverses, a British bomber plane bombed the helpless weary army in rags A splinter maimed a brave boy and he bled profusely Shah Nawaz cried out "Bandage the boy's severed leg at once" But the boy replied "No, no, let it bleed, for Netaji has said that if we give him our blood he will give us freedom"

Not for nothing had Netaji rehearsed in his dauntless heart for years *Mantrer sadan kimba sharir patan*

I'll achieve my Goal—I cry,
And, failing, I'm vowed to die

APPENDIX X

During our three months' stay in New York, in 1953, we were invited once—on April 28—to attend the exhibition of a documentry film on Indian Independance, to be showed to a predominantly American audience

One by one, the great leaders of our National Congress flashed out on the screen and were introduced to the Americans by the official announcer A great applause rang out in the auditorium when Mahatma Gandhi appeared and was described by the epithet, *Father of the Nation* We were all strangely affected by his familiar figure, in loin-cloth, exuding an aroma of sincerity and nobility Goethe has said "*Wer fremde Sprache*

* *Unto Him a Witness*, Pa t III, Chapter 2

nicht kennt, weiszt nichts von seiner eigenen" (He who has not learnt a foreign language knows not his mother tongue) Even so, I reflected that evening, one knows not one's great men till one sees them from the distant perspective of a foreign land across the sea

But I was thrilled to the soul when my nonpareil friend, Subhash Chandra Bose, our Netaji, flashed out on the creen his rapt face, bewitching smile, graceful gestures, wistful eyes, aristocratic gait—everything made me catch my breath when, suddenly, I winced as the commentator summed him up as one who could not achieve what the *Father of the Nation* did all by himself through his pet non-violence, *ahimsa*

I felt like protesting then and there, the more so as I had heard the identical judicial arm-chair verdict before in my homeland I wrote about Netaji afterwards, a few years later in my "Reminiscences" (in Bengali, entitled *Smriti-charan*) I will give here the gist of my vindication of this great son of modern India

No one who has seriously pondered over all that Netaji stood for (and tried impartially to appraise his achievement against his aspiration) can help but be impressed by the legacy of life-giving inspiration he has left for all times, nor dare deny that he brought nearer the day of Indian Swaraj by a decade at the very least Men with missions are not born in shoals in any age or clime, and the high-born ones who can live for a high ideal, staking everything men cherish at one throw of the dice, are still rarer phenomena in this our world of dust and din, pelf and self Netaji belonged to just such a Pleiad of flame-intoxicated souls who are born to show us how to answer the call of the Flame with the flame of our fire-pledged hearts

But it is not a mere metaphorical cadence of the fire that his resonant answer has bequeathed to us For he was not only a dream minstrel but a wide-awake realist as well, and, above all, a mystic martyr who paved the way to Indian independence by his storm-defiant courage and incredible thirst for grinding labour, a thirst that never let him rest or go slow even when his health

broke down in the jail over and over again We all remember how vibrant with emotion his voice sounded and how it would tune or heart-strings in a moment to the pitch of his mystic patriotism whenever his hortatory appeal would be wafted on the wings of the Radio from Berlin, Singapore, Tokyo or Rangoon We did not at the time know much about the Indian Army he had raised in Malaya for the liberation of our country But a few dangerous sparks of his incandescent love of freedom and breath-taking audacity were enough to set our souls aflame as soon as his warm exhortation over the wireless started scattering heat And, as he went on speaking regularly, appealing to our patriotism, the hearts of thousands of Indian soldiers caught fire all over the country exactly in the way he had prophetically anticipated In the beginning, our haughty rulers had not taken his inflammatory speeches seriously But when—in 1945—two bitter naval mutinies broke out one after the other in Karachi and Bombay through the delayed action of his war-time speeches, they awoke from their sleep of complacency and realised their mistake Fearful and nervous, they whispered then in India and England "Who knows? Another sepoy mutiny may be in the offing!"

But, alas, it is a historical fact that though we teach history we learn nothing from history till fear comes to show us how to glean wisdom from our past folly So, the British Bureaucracy, with a flourish of fanfare, announced bravely that they were going to try three of our brave I N A officers—Sahgal, Dhillon and Shah Nawaz —in Delhi Red Fort The announcemnet having been made directly after Netaji's reported death abroad, it caused, naturally, an instant upheaval in the Indian army all over the country, so much so that not a few sepoys contributed to the fund that was being raised for the defence of the trio who made history And as the trial was reported in the Indian papers which espoused their cause boldly, the three accused on trial shone haloed with the glory of would-be martyrs instead of traitor deserters The result was that even loyal soldiers woke up, stirred to their depths, touched by the rebel fire

which Netaji, the martyr, hand kindled in their hearts. This is not an over-drawn picture for it was bruited about everywhere that India would submit no more to the humiliation of having its patriot officers convicted as criminals No less a personality than Pandit Nehru said openly on August 20, 1945 "The punishment given to them would in effect be a punishment on all India and a deep wound would be created in millons of hearts" And there were many other things which added fuel to fire Netaji's admirers, singing his praises, swelled into a choral choir, a film in which he figured—which had been smuggled out of Singapore—was being shown privately in different places in India, stories of his having actually fought on Indian soil with his army of liberation began to be widely circulated and some of his inflammatory radio speeches from Germany and Burma were cited far and wide

No wonder the *volte face* came suddenly as it happens so often in history after the leonine roar of Churchill ("I have not come to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire!"), the next Prime Minister, Attlee, offered meekly to hand over India to Indians while the die-hard John Bull, who had hissed at Gandhiji dubbing him "the naked fafir", looked on wringing his hands in helpless fury at the aureole that deepened from day to day round the head of "that lunatic" Bose But, alas, the powers that be seldom appraise the far repercussions of a 'lunatic' deed blest by Dame Destiny So, it was Netaji's midsummer madness (which had fathered the battle-cry *Delhi chalo*) that came to sway the time-old loyal pillars of the British Empire the sepoys who were suspected to be hatching a second mutiny within a century!

Incidentaly, I may mention that Netaji was wont to call the mutiny of 1857 a misnomer He wrote in 1934 in his famous book, *The Indian struggle*, that at first we had not realised "the real character and role of the Britishers who came to India", and that as soon as it was born home to us that they had come "to conquer and plunder and not to settle down in India a mighty re-

volution broke out in 1857, which has been incorrectly called by English historians 'the Sepoy Mutiny', but which is regarded by the Indian people as the First War of Independence" (*The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, Chap 20) So, many among us, gasping in awe and wonder, raised the cry that Netaji had irrevocably initiated the Second War of Independence at the time when he announced the birth of the Indian National Army in Malaya in 1943 These admirers and slogan-builders now began freely to circulate the big rumour that the English report of his death was a black lie and that he was going to erupt like a volcano in India (even as he had done in Singapore) as soon as the hour was ripe for an armed insurrection This rumour did hearten us all—and in especial, the disgruntled sepoys—at the time of the I N A trial The point I want to make is that it was Netaji's spetacular achievement abroad, of recruiting an army, that had ignited the first spark of revolt in the heart of many a sepoy, a revolt which threatened to assume overnight the proportions of a country-wide conflagration Had this not been so, the British would never have come down from their haughty heights to offer us independence on a plate with the cresses of that round-table smile of sympathetic understanding, in other words, had not Netaji infected our troops with his dare-devil *Delhi-Chalo* barrier-blasting bugle, our freedom would have been delayed by a decade at the very least

And this is not the verdict of a mere "hero-worshipping friend"—as I have been called by some adverse critics of Netaji Mr Hugh Toye, too, who has seldom erred on the side of leniency when judging Netaji in his biography of the "Springing Tiger"* has not only agreed substantially with me, but has done me the honour of quoting me with approval, as well (p 175)

There can be little doubt that the Indian National Army, not in its unhappy career on the battle-field, but in its thunderous disintegration, hastened the

* Mr Toye's biography is entitled *The Springing Tiger*; the title as well as the picture of the pouncing tiger on the jacket is evidently borrowed from Azad Hind Fauj standard

end of the British rule in India The agitation which surrounded the trials turned the issue of independence for India into an instant, burning question once more 'Subhash's suddenly amplified figure,' says Dilip Kumar Roy, 'added to the romance of an Indian Army marching singing to Delhi, galvanised a frustrated nation out of its torpor, and substantially damaged the insulation of the Indian Army from the magnetic currents of popular enthusiasm for immediate independence '

But Netaji accomplished this feat not only because of the lime-light of romance that Dame Destiny had focused on her fearless son, with the song of a new morn on his lips, but also by dint of his innate greatness of character, not to mention his magnetic personality which could attract masses to flock to his banner of revolt And he did electrify them into a reckless courage that laughed perils to scorn Otherwise even his hard critic Mr Toye would not have conceded so handsomely (*The Springing Tiger*, p 177)

> There was no lack of physical courage he could stand as straight as any under aerial bombs or bullets The escape from India, the journey to the Far East, needed great spirit He maintained a brave independence from the Japanese it is something to be sure of oneself, to stake all on one's own judgment Many of Bose's weaknesses were the weaknesses of his single-minded strength For most, the personality of the man was overwhelming there was a genius of enthusiasm, of inspiration Men found that when they were with him only the cause mattered, saw only through his eyes, thought the thoughts he gave them Rabindranath Tagore had once hailed him as the long-sought Deliverer of the Bengali Nation, the one who would unite and re-awaken For the I N A, as for Bengal, there was no resisting his compulsion

But all this is past history, more or less known to us all So let me conclude with a significant tribute not

so well known, although I have quoted it in my Bengali travelogue, *Deshe Deshe Chali Urhe*

To give the context first

I had been staying in Bombay for well over a fortnight to raise funds for the Pondicherry Yoga-ashram of my Gurudev, Sri Aurobindo The organisers of my concerts gave me a reception at the Cricket Club The eminent lawyer, Bhulabhai Desai, of I N A trial fame, had been asked to preside At dinner, seated next to me, he thrilled us all with his warm tribute to Netaji

I had heard about him a great deal and admired his impassioned and telling defence of the famous trio at the Delhi Red Fort in which he had declaimed so challengingly "The honour and the law of the Indian National Army are on trial before this Court and the right to wage war with immunity on the part of a subject race for their liberation" But what I did not know was that he had grown overnight into an ardent admirer of Netaji I will give here the gist of what he told me on that (for me) memorable evening

"I am told, Sri Roy," he said without ado, "that you were one of Netaji's most intimate friends and that you were colleagues together in Calcutta and Cambridge So I am going to tell you what you will surely be delighted to hear You must be knowing that Netaji, like all great men, was rich in adverse critics who imputed all sorts of motives to his every act It so happened that I had ranged myself against him with these, swelling the ranks of his political opponents The herd-instinct, you know, is pretty difficult to resist Thus I had grown to echo what the coterie in which I moved said against him —that it was a pity he wouldn't toe the line and regrettable that he talked flamboyantly about violence, armed insurrection and so on—you know the stock arguments"

"But," he went on to add, "when I was engaged as a defence counsel of the far-famed I N A trio, I had, naturally, to scan and make the most of the plans and programmes of Netaji—first, through the evidence of his comrades-in-arms and, secondly, through that of the do-

cuments and records testifying to his many-sided achievements Now, the more I came to know of him the more I was impressed till, soon enough, the scales fell from my eyes and I felt deep pangs of remorse for having disparaged him in my cocksure arrogance like an irresponsible debunker of the spirit who has no sense or conception of the deeper soul-values For it was brought home to me somewhat apocalyptically that here was no cheap firebrand patriot whose nationalism stemmed from blind fanaticism of a one-track mind or whose ardour derived from the megalomania of a self-adulator Nay he was revealed to me in that awed moment of discovery as a far-seeing statesman, a born realist, a strategist to his finger-tips and an idealist-cum-seer who could not halt or rest on the way because he was haunted by an irresistible, almost a mystic, call he had to answer with the last drop of his freedom-hungry blood "

"But with him," Sri Desai went on, "it was not a question of the warrior's master urge only he had to be, withal, both the architect and the builder of his dream edifice In other words, it was the seed of a colossal aspiration he had to sow in every recruit and then to make it shoot up overnight into a gigantic tree And remember, he had no comrade of his calibre to help him! He had to achieve everything with the sole power of his magic personality—an all but incredible miracle to be brought off by his electric faith in order that the dream he had dreamed with every fibre of his wakeful consciousness might come true at one bold sweep This may, indeed, sound like rhetoric, but it was within an ace of being encompassed For had he only been able to take Imphal, the bulk of the Indian army in India would have deserted the British and flocked to his banner to swell the ranks of the Indian National Army So, you see, he could almost claim it as a *fait accompli* because it very nearly *was!*"

There was a catch in his breath as we listened spellbound He surveyed us with a cryptic smile and added "To think, Dilip Kumar, that he could not only dare as he did, but, starting from scratch, be vowed to build an

Army of Liberation—and in what milieu? In an alien country where, when he had landed, there had been not a soul to greet him, not a friend he could rely on, not a comrade to discuss things with—and where he had to persuade, first, the supercilious Germans that he was in a position to deliver the goods and then, the hard-headed Japanese that he was destined to succeed! Just fancy, my friend, for a destitute and exile, with no credentials save that of his face of light, to recruit a veritable Army and sound his tingling call '*Chalo Delhi*—On to Delhi!' Doesn't it read like a real saga—or, shall I say, a fairy-tale all but translated into reality? And then it was not a mere blowing of bugles and beating of drums he had to lead his soldiers *personally* to assault the heights of Imphal! And last, though not least, to create a Provisional Government with its multifarious ramifications health, food, supply, flags, artillery, tents, medicine it takes one's breath away—for, mind you, all this did originate in a single brain! And then what clarione call he sounded on July 5, 1943 in his historic speech inauguiating the birth of the Indian army at Singapore

> Soldiers of India'sArmy of Liberation! Today is the proudest day of my life Today it has pleased Providence to givc me the unique privilege and honour of announcing to the whole world that India's Army of Liberation has come into being Comrades! You have accepted a mission that is the noblest that the human mind can conceive of For the fulfilment of such a mission no sacrifice is too great, not even the sacrifice of one's life
>
> I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory For the presnt I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death But if you follow me in life and in death, as I am confident you will, I shall lead you to victory and freedom It does not matter who among us will live to see India free It is enough that India shall be free and that we shall have given our all to make

her free May God now bless our Army and grant us victory in the coming fight! *Inquilab Zindabad! Azad Hind Zindabad!*

"I tell you, Dilip Kumar," Sri Desai went on in an animated voice, as we listened on to him, enraptured "Netaji shall live for all times as a singing lighthouse of inspiration to posterity in this our drab age where all the rest is dumb ash."

A silence fell which throbbed only with the cadence of his voice After a time I asked him thickly "Do you know a favourite poem of Netaji's, a poem of Chesterton's, *The Great Minimum*?"

He was a little surprised and answered "No why?"

"I often catch myself imagining him reciting it with his last breath

It is something to have wept as we have wept,
It is something to have done as we have done,
It is something to have watched when all men slept
And seen the stars which never see the sun

Postscript—I have taken the liberty of reporting Sri Desai freely in my own language I don't claim that the style was his But I have no hesitation in vouching for the authenticity of his impassioned tribute, the less so as what he said moved us all profoundly because of his unquestionable sincerity and delivery, not to mention the warmth of his voice unmarred by any false notes Lastly, he cited only a sentence from Netaji's impassioned appeal whereas I have quoted in full his climacteric exhortation ending with the National Hallelujah

I may mention that a year later I met Sri Habibur Rahman who was entrusted with Netaji's last message He had said "Habib! My end is near I have fought for my country's freedom but others must take up the fight now That is my message to my coutrymen Tell them if they continue the fight our freedom is assured" Could any dying message be more life-giving?

APPENDIX XI

NETAJI, THE MYSTIC

(*A speech delivered in Delhi on 11-12-1964*)

I thank the organisers of Netaji Exhibition Committee for inviting me to pay my heart's tribute to one who has been an abiding inspiration in my life as well as my dearest friend on earth I am also greatly heartened because one of my oldest friends (and Netaji's as well) is here, to wit, Shri H V Kamath who also was inspired early in his life by the great luminary's light of love and nobility which has made history

Tonight I shall speak briefly about the mystic I hailed in him, and told him so categorically time and time again, though he was wont to contend, equally categorically, that he was merely a servant of our Motherland or holy India, as he loved to characterise her so often I stress this because in my life I have met very few men who could emulate his faith in India's holiness Such a perception, I claim, entitles him to the epithet of the mystic, even though some people may question this, arguing that a mystic is an introvert whereas Netaji was a passionate and indefatigable activist But any one who has been blessed enough to have known him intimately will surely concur with me that he was at great pains, often enough, to curb the mystic afflatus which gripped him now and again Of late his early letters to his mother have been published, which will bear me out, as they do reveal, at every turn, how profoundly his adolescent soul loved the mystic outlook on life He is a sample He wrote to her when he was a boy of fifteen (1912-13)

> "Mother! Today is *Mahanavami* of Mother Durga Possibly the Puja will be celebrated with great eclat this year But tell me, mother, why must we do it with a flourish? Surely, all that is needed is that we call to her in a moved voice! For isn't that the greatest worship which is performed with the heart's fervour?" (Translation, mine)

When I met him first in the Presidency College—in 1913—I can well recall how he not only outflashed before my admiring eyes with the halo of a rare academic distinction (having stood second in order of merit among 10,000 matriculates) but with the far richer aureole of a spiritual aspirant inspired by Swami Vivekananda We all stood in awe and many among us commented, with bated breath, that he did look like one on whom the mantle of the great Vedantin seemed to have fallen I learned next from one of his admirers that he was often seen standing in the Ganges reciting unintelligible and ponderous Sanskrit hymns! But he made his way straight into my heart when he acclaimed my father's patriotic-spiritual songs and exhorted me to sing them from door to door, inspiring our *tamasic* (lethargic) people in the sleepy hollow of Bengal

Within the short time at my disposal I cannot possibly enlarge on how our friendship developed in Calcutta and then at Cambridge where we discussed the three worlds and how he thrilled me day after romantic day by telling me of his dream of the India to be, recalling deep exhortations of Swamiji, Sri Aurobindo and others, especially a famous passage in one of Sri Aurobindo's letters (in Bengali) to his wife, where he wrote (translation, mine)

> "Others look upon our country as an inanimate thing, a sum total of fields and pastures, jungles and forests, mountains and rivers I look upon her as our very mother to be adored and worshipped When an ogre sits on her chest, out to suck her blood, what does the son do? Eat his meal in peace or go all out to the rescue of his mother?"

Day after day, he would thus pour his heart out to me and once he talked away far into the night (I have characterised it as our "last unforgettable night" in my Bengali memoirs) telling me about his sleepless solicitude for our motherland, and the deep impression he left on my youthful mind was always that of a born mystic whose watchword was worship In his adolescence had he not worshipped the Divine and written to his mother

(*Patravali*) "If one fails to realise God then one has frittered his time away There can be no true joy if one misses that eternal, Blissful Lord O mother, just look where we have landed in what a pitiful state is our dharma today! Where were they, our great ancestors, the Aryans, how high had they risen and where are we, their descendants? What bankruptcy of faith, what hypocrisy, corruption and what not? Mother mine, when you see such degradation doesn't your heart cry out Oh, how has our great dharma gone under! " And he felt it all so intensely because he loved—adored—Bharat as a "sacred land," *a la* Vivekananda he worshipped and Sri Aurobindo he admired So he wrote in another letter, taking a leaf out of their books as it were (pp 15-6)

> "Mother mine, India is our Lord's beloved country where He has chosen from age to age to be born as an *avatar* to enhallow her soil and inseminate in her sons the seed of *Dharma* and Truth It is true that He was born in other lands also, but surely nowhere else did He take birth so often So I may say that our motherland has ever been very dear to the Lord "

This deification of the Motherland which stemmed first from our great Bankimchandra the composer of *Vande Mataram*, is often denigrated by cosomopolitans on the ground that it is archaic It may, indeed, sound archaic now, but it is certainly not discredited as a living *mantra* among the accredited thought-movers and nation-builders of today who have been an abiding source of inspiration to us all Take, for instance, Swami Vivekanand's memorable Colombo lecture January 1897)

> "Formerly, I thought, as every Hindu thinks, that this is the *Punya Bhumi*, the land of Karma Today I stand here and say, with the conviction of truth, that it is so Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth Hence have proceed-

ed the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualise the materialistic civilisation of the world "

And did not Sri Aurobindo, the great seer, subscribe whole-heartedly to this faith of the architect-saint of modern India when he wrote in his homage to *Rishi* Bankim Chandra (as he called him)

> " Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded, but never, even for a moment, utterly cease The hero, the *rishi*, the saint, are the natural fruits of the Indian soil and there has been no age in which they have not been born Among the *rishis* of the later age we must include the name of the man who gave us the reviving *mantra* which is creating a new India, the *mantra Vande Mataram* "

It is possible that Netaji is the last of the Romans and so we may nevermore be able to recapture the thrill of worshipping our Motherland as a deified Priestess of the Spirit If so, I for one can only be sorry, for I, too, am fully persuaded that India is a *Punya Bhumi* How often have I not sung in a moved voice the last song, my father composed a few days before his passing, a song Netaji adored and found "thrilling" (Translation—Sri Aurobindo)

To thy race, O India, God himself
once sang the Song of songs divine,
Upon thy dust Gouranga danced
and drank God-love s mysterious wine ,
Here the Sannyasin, Son of King
lit up compassion's deathless sun
And the youthful Yogin, Shankar, taught
thy gospel , " He and I are one "

Anyhow, this is a mystical thrill born of the soul's vision which Netaji believed to be true for all times Time and time again would he pour out his heart's raptures

(thus claiming kinship with the soul-throb of India's saints and sages and poets and prophets who had all cherished the same vision) not only extolling her past greatness, but dreaming of the India to be which (he would prophesy) must far outshine even all her past glory

One of the major tenets of the mystical outlook is that only through suffering and pain can the soul arrive It is because he had always believed this that Netaji could call to his countrymen so movingly in one of his most beautiful exhortations which I have quoted in my book on him

> "Do you want the fragrance of the full-blown rose? If so, you must accept the thorns Do you want the sweetness of the smiling dawn? If so, you must live through the dark hours of the night Do you want the joy of liberty and the solace of freedom? If so, you must pay the price and the price of liberty is suffering and sacrifice (31-12-1931)

To mystic songs he responded every time with what the French call *abandon* For it was always, in his case, a call of the deep to the deep India, calling to her beloved son, ready to stake his all at one throw of the dice, India, the nurse of the spirit, calling to her spiritual son, who lived for the spirit! That is why I insisted, all along the line, on his leaving politics which had engulfed him, alas, irrevocably! For I was persuaded that he could have risen to far greater heights if only he had followed his *swadharma,* to wit, the call of Vivekananda, I told him, time and time again, that the mantle of the great prophet was all but ready to fall on his shoulders if only he would accept it

I know full well that here many will disagree with my appraisement of his *swadharma*, but then they did not know him as intimately as I did and so never felt the high-born mystic pulsate through his blood I have written at great length about this in my book on him, so I need not repeat it all I would only quote a few lines to substantiate my thesis that he had inhibited the mystic trend of his nature which was so native to his essentially religious soul

And it was the mystic in him that made him write at the age of fifteen to his mother (pp 7-8 *Patravali*, translation, mine)

> "Mother, the Lord is unstinting in His bounty, but we are blind sceptics and faithless atheists and so can't realise the greatness of His compassion How can we? We cry out to Him, indeed, but only while in distress The moment we are out of the wood, we forget Him completely Which is why Kunti Devi sang in her immemorial prayer 'Keep me in adversity, my Lord, so I may call to you whole-heartedly In happiness I am apt to dismiss you, so I have no use for happiness ' Mother, this life of ours is a patchwork quilt made up of life and death, pain and joy The only thing that counts therein is the Name of the Lord—*Harinam* So if we decline to sing His name our life must become a vanity"

Such a message is on all fours with those of our greatest mystics and saints like Guru Nanak, Tulsidas, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna and others And I may go on multiplying such excerpts But as I need not emphasise any more this aspect of his many-mooded nature I will end on a more personal note in the reminiscing vein because it is as moving as it is interesting

After my return from Pondicherry, one day I gave him a reception at my sister's place at Barrackpore I sang with my pupil Srimati Uma, and Amala (who married Udayshankar a few years later) danced After the soiree he offered to take me back to Calcutta in his own car I accepted with alacrity, looking forward to a confidential talk with him in the car I was not disappointed he poured his heart out to me I was profoundly moved by his confidence, albeit not a little saddened by his pain and disillusionments At the end of the recital of his woes he placed his hand on mine and said "Dilip, I have a request to make to you don't leave soon for your ivory tower I need you" I was astonished and said, to make light of it all, that my staying in Calcutta could not possibly matter much to a great popular leader like him, the less so as I hardly expected he would have much time

to spare for the society of a prospective recluse like me He did not return my ironic smile and said "Dilip, I know you don't care for politics and still less for the atmosphere around me I don't blame you either, although I, too, may return the compliment and say that I don't care for the deep *purdah* you, Yogis, seem to adore By my whole point is that we do need you even if you don't need us And, to be even more personal, I need you because I want to feel that here in Calcutta I have at least one friend on whom I can fully rely, in whom I can confide without reserve "

I have, indeed, put in my words, but he did say all this and more when, on that memorable night, he talked on and on of his deep disenchantments Dare one call such a friend and an idealist rigid or frigid or unresponsive to human affection ?

The last instance I want to give of his compelling personality is going to be a strange one Many a time have I recounted it to my friends, in public and private, to bring home to them the magic force of the dominating personality, but I have not written about it so far in my reminiscences because I felt that it was too personal and might be misinterpreted But it is worth relating as it does illustrate Rabindranath Tagore's thesis "*Je pare se apni pare pare se phul photate*" that is,

Who can make a bud outflower,
Save he who's booned with the mystic power ?

It hanpened like this, In 1927, I was invited by the Edison Gramophone Company in New York to make some long-playing records Subhash was jubilant like a child and (with the help of two of my old friends, Nalini Kanta Sarcar and Kazi Nazrul Islam) organised a big meeting at the University institute to felicitate me The great novelist Saratchandra consented to preside and Rabindranath himself was invited to bless me publicly A number of literary men and musicians also attended among whom the famous writer Sri Pramatha Choudhry took a leading part The large auditorium and stage seethed with humanity, so much so that when the Poet came

Subhash had to cordon him off personally to take him up on to the stage

But worse was to come the hall, packed to suffocation, first hummed and then rang out with the noise of the appeals and cries from the audience and every speaker was booed down summarily, the students took the leading part, clamouring for a song "We want songs, please songs no speeches, for God's sake sing *ranga jaba,* Dilip Babu *ranga jaba* *ranga jaba* " and so on As the lesser speakers hadn't the ghost of a chance, Sri Pramatha Choudhry rose to his feet, to be dismissed out of hand So last, though not least, Saratchandra stood up and appealed, but alas, in vain ! We were at a loss, not knowing what to do, when Subhash leapt to his feet and, scarlet with indignation, thumped the table "Silence" he roared, "silence, I say ! We have gathered here to felicitate Dilip Kumar and we have invited our revered Poet to bless him We have printed a programme and we must stick to it You have all come here to testify to your affection for Dilip Kumar and wish him God-speed on his musical mission in America He will sing at the end, but we insist on good manners and discipline on your part How can we build a nation if we are undisciplined and behave like Philistines and rowdies? Mother India expects every son of hers to know how to behave himself So I insist, I repeat, on a pin-drop silence and that at once " And, lo, the miracle happened the clamour was stilled instantly into an awed hush ! He did ride the howling storm and rule the boisterous waves of rebel faces on that unforgettable evening Indeed it had to be seen to be believed the incredible impact of his tremendous personality which refused to accept defeat ! To this was added a mystic magnetism, a decade and half later, when he attained his peak in Malaya and Burma to be acclaimed by millions of Indians of every caste and creed as Netaji, the great leader of the Nation Could any epithet be more eloquent, any authority more ecumenical? *Vande Mataram*

And this authority may well be compared to the light a great soul is sometimes born to, like a heritage Only

it is not quite a human heritage, this lustre of personality Anyway, it clung to him loyally all his life and stood him in good stead even in the most inconceivable milieus But nowhere were the odds so formidable against him as they were in Germany first, and then in Malaya, Burma and Japan For just imagine, my friends, his derelict state when (and doesn't it read like a fairly tale?) he started on his adventure on the fateful night of January 17, 1941 in the guise of a Lucknow Moulvi and, thereafter, from Kabul under the name of Orlando Mazzotta, an Italian bound for Berlin! And why did he want to get to Berlin at any cost? Because he was persuaded that Germany would win the war and might be induced to help India So he gambled recklessly with faith in his burning patriotism as his only asset and his radiant sincerity his only passport But when all is said and done, it was his fiery personality which gave him the ring of authority which convinced even the haughty Hitler that it would be worth while to befriend the rebel And Hitler was so deeply impressed by him that he agreed finally "to delete the derogatory remarks he had made about India in his book, *Mein Kampf*, following a representation by Subhash Bose"* But his path was not strewn with roses even after Hitler's acceptance of his *bona fides* "For months, certain Nazi officials," writes Sri Ganpuley, an eye-witness in Germany at the time, "went on insisting on terms for their co-operation which were impossible for a nationalist and patriot like Subhash to accept Rather disgusted with them, he once coolly told his Nazi partners 'For the sake of my country I have risked my neck to come to Germany For the same reason I am prepared to return to India if I cannot achieve my purpose The British C I D. is very efficient and just as I escaped in spite of it, I shall escape your Gestappo also' "*

The citations given here are from the very valuable book, entitled *Netaji in Germany*, (written by Sri N G Ganpuley and published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay), to which the Foreword is written by a German officer, Dr Adalbert Seifriz who is now the President of the Labour Office and the Indo-German

What happened thereafter was no less spectacular his project of establishing a Free India Centre with troops under him, recruited from Indian prisoners in Germany, took shape and was launched by the German Foreign Office and generously financed by an alien despot! It would be beyond the purview of my lecture to deal with this phase of his life exhaustively Those who are really interested are referred to Sri Ganpuley's brilliant account of how Netaji moved mountains in Berlin, organising and inspiring the troops under him and arranging all about broadcasting fiery speeches daily from Berlin (which we were to hear subsequently in Calcutta and elsewhere in India, electrified to a man)

"In November 1941," writes Sri Ganpuley (p 51), "Azad Hind Radio opened its patriotic programme with an announcing speech by Netaji himself This was an exceptionally solemn and yet interesting occasion on which he was supposed to have come out from his grave to inform his brothers and sisters that he was alive and could open his heart to them For a time, tears dimmed his eyes and choked his voice "

And how tirelessly he had to work in Berlin for his strenuous broadcasting can be better imagined than described for he was asked by the German authorities "to send out three hours' programme *every day*" (p 53)!

It was almost a superhuman task But Netaji rose to the occasion and quickly organised a staff of translators recruited from Indians of all provinces who happened to be in Germany at the time To quote briefly from the chapter entitled, *Azad Hind Radio* "Hindi translation and also speaking in Hindi was done by a young gentleman from Delhi , Persian translation and talking in Persian was done by an Afghan student The Pushtu translation and broadcasting was done by two young men from the North-Western Frontier The Tamil translation and transmission was done by a nationalist businessman.. Telugu by a young man from Hyderabad! "

Society in Stuttgart All who have loved Netaji (and their number is legion) would do well to read this highly inspiring account of his incredible achievements in Germany against stupendous odds

But I must not take more of your time, I have already spoken for nearly two hours So I will conclude with a heart-warming tribute to Netaji quoted from Dr Adalbert's Foreword to Sri Ganpuley's book

> "The High Command and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted Bose the necessary funds and, furthermore, placed at his disposal personnel, training camps and material
>
> The Indian Volunteers had to undergo a basic training when entering the Indian Legion which was based on the voluntry co-operation of the Indian volunteers It can be said that the experiment to form Hindus, Sikhs, Moslems, Punjabis, Mahrattas, Bengalis and members of other religious communities into a close military unit and to form an efficient fighting force was crowned with success The Indians in the Legion proved to be good soldiers beside their German comrades-in-arms
>
> The intellectual basis for the growth and success of the Legion was created by Subhash Bose Repeatedly he explained to his compatriots and the German personnel his ideas about the Legion and their future task in free India He was very anxious to see preserved in the Legion traditions of the cultural and political past of his country With a feeling, fine and noble, he did his utmost to banish the danger of losing the cultural roots of his Legionaries To many a man Subhash Bose seemed to be a reserved and contemplative personality But when he stood in front of the Legion and expressed his ideas for a free India in detail, then the fire of the fighter and the revolutionary could be felt He was never too tired to inspire trust and confidence in various discussions He was the great idol of the Legion, and it was the ardent desire of each Legionary to try to emulate him
>
> A meeting with Subhash Bose was a special event for the German training staff He lives in their minds as an idealistic and fighting personality,

never sparing himself in the service of his people and his country "

I have quoted this with a threefold purpose first, to substantiate my thesis that Netaji was nothing if not an idealist and dreamer in the essence of his being, secondly, to prove that even when he consorted with the Nazis he never forgot his heart's one dream that he felt himself missioned to achieve the political deliverance of his beloved land, not to exult in the petty pride of the cheap patriot who vaunts and blusters, but to make India great, nay, even greater than her past, and, lastly, to show that he was a mystic at heart, the reason why he loved to quote two quatrains of Kipling

" Father in Heaven who lovest all,
Oh, help thy children when they call,
That they may build from age to age
An undefiled heritage "

Aye, it is to build this heritage and enhance its splendour that he was vowed to live I can still recapture the thrill we all felt whenever he would recite in his warm, bass voice

There is but one task for all—
One life for each to give
What stands if freedom fall?
Who dies if England live?

Only he would replace "England" by "India" whenever he declaimed this noble exhortation, but exploiting it only as fuel for the burning aspiration of his soul

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One of the major schemes of the Bhavan is the publication of the HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE in 10 volumes So far seven volumes have been published viz, (1) The Vedic Age (2) The Age of Imperial Unity (3) Class cal Age (4) The Age of Imperial Kanauj (5) The Struggle for Empire (6) The Delhi Sultanate and (7) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance The remaining volumes will follow at an interval of 8-10 months This is considered to be the first successful attempt at re writing the History of India by her own sons on a very exhaustive basis

MUNSHI SARASWATI MANDIR
An Institute of Culture with a Library consisting of over 65,000 volumes including many Indological volumes, Museum consisting of old and valuable palm leaf manuscripts, coins, paintings etc

VALLABHJI RAMJI BALPUSTAKALAYA
A Library for Children with facilities for indoor games, educational films etc.

BHARATIYA KALA KENDRA
The Kala Kendra is devoted to the development of Drama, Dance and Music The Kala Kendra produces dramas and dance ballets in English as well as in Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi to encourage amateur talents An Inter-Collegiate Dramatic competition, in several languages, is also sponsored by it every year for the same purpose Ideal facilities for these activities are provided in the Bhavan's auditorium—the Kanji Khetsey Sabhagriha

BHARATIYA SANGIT SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Indian Classical Music, affiliated to the Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith Lucknow, which is recognised by the Central Government for courses leading to the Bachelor of Music Degree

BHARATIYA NARTAN SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Dance for teaching the four systems of Indian dancing viz Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali and Bharata Natyam

BOOK UNIVERSITY
Publishes books, ancient and modern, at low price (Rs 2 50 each) to make available the best literature and classics of India and the world to the common man in an easily understandable form So far 115 titles have been published and over 10 00,000 copies have in all been sold Some of the books have also been published in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Tamil A new one rupee Series has also been started

Prakashan Mandir

Apart from our HISTORY and BOOK UNIVERSITY SERIES, this department also publishes the results of the research and other activities of the various Mandiras of the Bhavan and books of cultural value. Its publications include

Bharatiya Vidya Series Critical editions of texts, translations and original works of research in Indology—in Sanskrit and English Published volumes 22

Singhi Jain Series Critical editions of ancient works and manuscripts connected with Jain religion and literature Published volumes 52

The Glory that was Gurjaradesa. A comprehensive study of Gujarat in 7 volumes Published volumes 2

Munshi Sahitya Social novels, historical plays, biographical works of Munshiji and Smt Lilavati Munshi in Gujarati and English, the copyright whereof has been kindly gifted by them to the Bhavan Published volumes 80

JOURNALS

Bharatiya Vidya An Indological research quarterly in English started in 1943. Published volumes 22

Bhavan's Journal An English Fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture started in August 1954 Present circulation 50,000 copies Annual Subscription Rs 6 50

Bharati A Hindi Fortnightly started in August 1956 Annual Subscription Rs 6 50.

Samarpan A Gujarati Fortnightly started in November 1959 Annual Subscription Rs 6 50

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Bhavan's press where all its publications and periodicals are printed and where practical training in printing is given to the students of the Bhavan's College of Journalism Advertising and Printing

College of Journalism, Advertising & Printing

An Institution for providing systematic instruction in Journalism, Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations and Printing

M M College of Arts & N M Institute of Science

The College was opened by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in June 1946 It is affiliated to the Bombay University for courses of studies leading to B A, B Sc, M A, M Sc, and Ph D degrees

Bhavan's College of Arts & Science, Dakor

The College was opened by Dr Jivraj Mehta, Chief Minister, Gujarat, in June 1962 It is affiliated to the Gujarat University for courses of studies leading to B A & B Sc degrees.

Sardar Patel College of Engineering

The College was opened in June 1962 for courses of studies leading to B E (Civil, Mechanical and Electrical) degree It is affiliated to the Bombay University

Bhavan's School, New Delhi

The School coaches students for the Cambridge School Leaving Examination the medium of instruction being English Sanskrit and Hindi are compulsory subjects Music, Indian dancing and painting are also taught to the students

Bhavan's Academy of Languages, New Delhi and Bombay

The Academy teaches four foreign languages, viz, German Russian French and Spanish

Mungalal Goenka Sanskrit Trust

The income from this Trust goes to support the Post-graduate and Research Department of the Bhavan

Associated Bodies

Sanskrit Vishva Parishad, Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh Bombay Astrological Society